Rebels Caught Between Needs and Norms

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Abstract

Existing research suggests that rebel groups with aspirations for international legitimacy avoid practices that harm their reputation. This study asserts that this logic does not necessarily apply to forced recruitment of fighters. Unlike other coercive practices, recruitment is not a mere tactical choice but a foundational requirement for organizational survival. The indispensable need for fighters compels rebels to weigh recruitment needs against aspirations for legitimacy and balance the imperative for survival against the potential for international backlash. I argue that pre-war social origins condition the recruitment practices of legitimacy-aspiring rebels by boosting both voluntary and materially-motivated recruitment. Pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations provide groups with networks for disseminating ideological appeals, fostering trust, and cultivating collective convictions favoring violent mobilization, thereby enhancing the ability to attract voluntary recruits. The boost in voluntary recruitment demonstrate rebels' organizational capacity and serve as humanitarian justifications for external supporters. External support, which can be used for monetary incentives, attracts recruits motivated by tangible benefits, further reducing the need for forced recruitment. Thus, rebel organizations best positioned to refrain from forced recruitment are those with both aspirations for international legitimacy and pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations. Using cross-national data on 115 rebel organizations, I find strong empirical support for this hypothesis. My work builds on the growing body of research on rebels' engagement with international audiences, highlights the role of social origins in shaping future behavior, and suggests that the constraints they face in galvanizing domestic support limit legitimacy-aspiring rebel groups' adherence to international humanitarian laws.

Keywords: rebel recruitment, violent political mobilization, international humanitarian law, international legitimacy, reputation

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In 2014, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights established the OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL) to investigate alleged human rights violations by the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) during the decades-long civil war. The OISL documented systematic forced recruitment of civilians into the LTTE, which the commission concluded was in "contravention to Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and the LTTE's obligations under international humanitarian law" (UNHCHR 2015, p. 224). Civil conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Angola, and Uganda have witnessed systematic forced recruitment campaigns by rebel groups[1]. Outside the African continent, many rebel groups, such as the PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*) in Turkey and Maoist insurgents in Nepal, have employed large-scale forced recruitment under their "compulsory conscription laws"[2].

While scholars have extensively studied the causes of rebel practices that violate international humanitarian law (IHL), a growing body of research informed by the literature on non-state actors' international reputation-building[3] has started to explore why rebel groups comply with IHL[4]. The prevailing argument in this body of research centers around a logic of restraint. Aspirations for international legitimacy encourage groups to exercise restraint towards civilians because violent and coercive tactics targeting civilians carry reputation costs in the eyes of international audiences that merit compliance with IHL[5].

While the legitimacy-restraint mechanism is intuitively appealing, its empirical record appears mixed. For instance, rebel restraint toward civilians is not effective in galvanizing international support unless rebels can contrast their restraint with the government's abuses[6]. Moreover, the lack of restraint does not always have a delegitimizing effect, as rebel groups can eliminate the international reputational costs of civilian killings by providing inclusive social services[7]. On the other hand, international legitimacy-seeking rebel groups are found to signal commitment to IHL only if doing so is unlikely to hurt their strategic-military calculations[8]. These findings suggest that the ways in which rebel incentives to exercise restraint towards civilians respond to aspirations for

[1](Humphreys and Weinstein 2008)
[2](Yılmaz 2019; Human Rights Watch 2007)
[3](Coggins 2011, 2015; Stewart 2018)
[4](Jo 2015; Stanton 2016; Fazal 2018; Fazal and Konaev 2019; Stanton 2020)
[5](Jo 2015)
[6](Stanton 2020)
[7](Flynn and Stewart 2018)
[8](Fazal and Konaev 2019)

international legitimacy may, in fact, be more complex than what intuition might suggest.

Consider the 2012 letter the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*) sent to the International Committee of the Red Cross, recognizing the importance of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. While signaling a commitment to IHL, the FARC also emphasized "the circumstances forcing [them] to use certain weapons and military tactics as the only way to counterbalance the use of force by the regime"[9]. This highlights a pragmatic approach to compliance: adherence to IHL is conditional, maintained only as long as it does not undermine the group's ability to resist. This selective compliance reveals the interaction between aspirations for international legitimacy and strategic-military imperatives in informing rebel adherence to IHL norms. Understanding this selective compliance could shed light on why groups with strong international legitimacy aspirations, such as the LTTE[10], still engage in forced recruitment practices.

In addressing this puzzle, I develop a theory on the interaction between aspirations for international legitimacy and strategic constraints in shaping rebel recruitment practices. I argue that the quest for international legitimacy does not straightforwardly deter forced recruitment. Unlike other coercive practices like indiscriminate violence against civilians, recruitment is not a mere tactical choice but a foundational requirement for organizational survival. The indispensable need for fighters compels rebels to weigh their recruitment needs against aspirations for legitimacy and balance the imperative for survival against the potential for international backlash. Aspirations for international legitimacy should deter rebels from forced recruitment only if they are well-positioned to consistently attract enough voluntary and/or materially-motivated recruits.

I argue that pre-war social origins play a crucial role in legitimacy-seeking rebels' recruitment practices by boosting both voluntary and materially-motivated recruitment. Pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations enable rebels to overcome the difficulties in spreading their ideological messages at a mass scale while operating clandestinely and to leverage communal trust and collective political convictions favoring violent mobilization to persuade a large number of potential recruits whose commitment may be too tenuous to volunteer purely for ideological reasons. These connections enhance the group's ability to attract voluntary recruits, as individuals are more likely to join a cause championed by trusted sources within their community. At the same time,

[9](FARC 2012)
[10](Klem and Maunaguru 2017, p. 639)

these communal ties and the increase in voluntary recruitment demonstrate the group's organizational capacity to international audiences and serve as humanitarian justifications for external supporters seeking to mitigate moral hazard concerns by ensuring that their support for rebels is perceived as aiding a legitimate social actor. Such external support can be utilized by rebel groups to offer monetary incentives to potential fighters beyond their initial communal outreach, thereby boosting materially-motivated recruitment and further reducing the need for forced recruitment. Coupled with aspirations for international legitimacy, the ability to recruit without coercion should deter rebels from resorting to forced recruitment. Therefore, rebel organizations best positioned to refrain from forced recruitment are those with both aspirations for international legitimacy and pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations.

To test my theory's observable implications, I analyze cross-national data on forced recruitment practices, international legitimacy-seeking behavior, and pre-war social origins of 115 rebel organizations from 1990 to 2018. I proxy groups' aspirations for international legitimacy by their attempts at international relations and diplomacy, specifically their membership in international organizations and diplomatic missions. I measure groups' pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations based on the sources of their initial membership. Using logistic regression models and extensive robustness checks, I find strong empirical support for my central argument: aspirations for international legitimacy and pre-war social origins combine to shape incentives for forced recruitment. Rebel groups seeking international legitimacy and with pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations are significantly less likely to resort to forced recruitment than other groups. However, aspirations for international legitimacy alone do not deter forced recruitment: groups seeking international legitimacy without pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations are not statistically less likely to resort to forced recruitment than non-legitimacy-seeking groups.

This study contributes to our understanding of rebel behavior in three ways. First, it highlights the potential limitations of the dominant logic of restraint in the literature on rebel engagement with international audiences for transnational support. This logic suggests that rebel groups aspiring for international legitimacy will refrain from violating international humanitarian law. My theory provides a more nuanced view of how rebel groups balance their strategic-military considerations with their aspirations for legitimacy. This theoretical advancement addresses the empirical puzzle of why some legitimacy-seeking rebel groups still resort to human rights violations and offers a

deeper understanding of the motivations and constraints that influence rebel behavior in adhering to international humanitarian law.

Second, this argument adds a novel layer to the incentive-constraint framework governing rebel recruitment, moving beyond the conventional dichotomy between ideological appeals and material incentives. By discussing how pre-war connections to civilian-led organizations—or the lack thereof—affect the potency of rebel ideological appeals in mobilizing recruits, we gain a more nuanced understanding of rebel recruitment within the social contexts in which these groups operate. Furthermore, the social capital rebels possess due to these pre-war ties, which enhances ideologically-driven voluntary recruitment, can theoretically also invigorate external support, thereby increasing revenues that can be used for material incentives, suggesting that ideological appeals and material incentives in rebel recruitment are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Finally, this research responds to calls in the study of organizational aspects of civil conflict to engage with how social origins shape the future behavioral trajectories of armed actors[11]. My findings suggest that the path-dependencies induced by pre-war social origins not only inform future behavior of rebel groups toward civilians but also limit the maneuver space for groups aspiring to build an international reputation. As such, this study has implications for understanding how rebel groups challenge state sovereignty and how contested sovereignty manifests in the lives of civilians in conflict zones, as well as for the study of how legitimacy is constructed and contested by non-state actors in the international arena.

Forced Recruitment by Rebels

Rebels can employ forced recruitment through overt violence, such as abductions, or institutionalized methods like compulsory conscription[12]. In some instances, rebel groups specifically target children for forced recruitment[13], while in other cases, adults may be coerced into joining or performing tasks for the group[14]. Regardless of the method, forced recruitment involves coercing individuals into joining clandestine organizations against their will.

[11](Parkinson 2013; Sarbahi 2014; Staniland 2014; Lewis 2017; Larson and Lewis 2018; Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020; Shesterinina and Livesey 2024; Braithwaite and Cunningham 2024; Koren and Uzonyi 2024)
[12](Walsh, Conrad and Whitaker 2023)
[13](Faulkner and Doctor 2021)
[14](Sawyer and Andrews 2020)

Existing research on rebel recruitment tactics examines both voluntary and coerced recruitment[15] and factors influencing the demand for and supply of child soldiers[16]. For example, the forced recruitment of children by rebels is thought to be driven by wartime pressures to quickly mobilize a large army or replenish losses from recent battles[17].

While much literature focuses on the positive incentives for forced recruitment, negative incentives have been mostly studied in the context of the challenges involuntary recruits pose for intra-group cohesion[18]. Other potential negative incentives, such as international reputation costs, have received less attention. Although there is extensive research on how international support and diplomatic pressure can disincentivize rebel groups from committing human rights violations[19], the relationship between aspirations for international legitimacy and rebel recruitment tactics has only recently begun to be explored[20].

The Conduct of War and International Legitimacy

While rebel groups may seek legitimacy from their constituencies, the opposing government, or their rebel allies, this study focuses on their pursuit of international legitimacy, as guided by the growing literature on rebel compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL). This emphasis on international legitimacy is due to the significant impact international recognition can have on the bargaining position and ultimate fate of rebel groups[21].

Coggins (2011) argues that international legitimacy, obtained through peer state recognition, is crucial for new states emerging from intra-state wars and often precedes the resolution of such conflicts. It allows emerging states to join the international community before consolidating domestic victory and sovereignty. For center-seeking rebel groups, gaining international legitimacy may be easier, especially if they secure the capital city[22]. However, this is not guaranteed, as seen with the Houthi rebels in Yemen, who captured the capital city of Sana'a in 2014 but were not

[15](Sawyer and Andrews 2020)
[16](Achvarina and Reich 2006; Haer, Faulkner and Whitaker 2020; Faulkner and Doctor 2021)
[17](Eck 2014; Haer and Böhmelt 2017; Faulkner and Doctor 2021)
[18](Berman 2003; Weinstein 2007; Best and Bapat 2018)
[19](Jo 2015; Stanton 2016; Fazal 2018; Gleditsch et al. 2018; Stanton 2020; Balcells and Stanton 2021)
[20](Braithwaite and Ruiz 2018)
[21](Stanton 2020, p. 528)
[22](Stewart 2018)

recognized by the international community[23].

International legitimacy-seeking refers to efforts to enhance "the legitimacy of their organization in the eyes of key political audiences that care about values consistent with international law at domestic and international levels"[24]. Jo (2015) argues that rebel groups seek legitimacy to influence foreign states with human rights agendas and organizations that view IHL adherence as legitimate. Conversely, international actors with little regard for human rights, such as authoritarian regimes, are likely to be less concerned with IHL compliance when deciding on support for rebel groups[25].

Signaling a commitment to IHL can be a powerful strategy for rebel groups to gain international legitimacy[26][27]. Some rebel groups formally commit to IHL by signing international treaties. For example, in 2013, SPLM-N (*Sudan People's Liberation Movement–North*) signed the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action. Abdelaziz Alhilu, Deputy Chairman of SPLM-N, stated, "we are also ready to cooperate in other fields of humanitarian mine action and call upon the international community to assist us in this endeavor"[29]. Rebel groups also often cite aspects of international humanitarian law to signal adherence to international norms, even without formal treaty signatories. In 2012, the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*) sent a letter to the ICRC recognizing the 1949 Geneva Conventions and 1977 Additional Protocols, committing to follow international humanitarian norms that protect civilians[30].

Rebel groups' efforts to signal IHL commitment for international legitimacy are understandable, given expectations from human rights organizations. For instance, Amnesty International urged the ULFA (*United Liberation Front of Assam*) in 1999 and 2007 "respect human rights and abide by international humanitarian law"[31] and reminded the group that "international humanitarian law, which applies to all parties to internal armed conflict, clearly prohibits the killing of

[23](Cooper and Schmitt 2024)
[24](Jo 2015, p. 13)
[25](Salehyan, Siroky and Wood 2014)
[26](Jo 2015; Stanton 2016; Fazal 2018; Stanton 2020)
[27]Other strategies include providing inclusive public services or engaging in intra-group democratic practices, such as electing leaders by popular vote[28].
[29](Geneva Call 2013)
[30](FARC 2012)
[31](Amnesty International 1999)

civilians"[32]. In 2019, The Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Centre emphasized that the SDF (*Syrian Democratic Forces*) are bound by Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and IHRL to treat detainees humanely, IHL provisions are "equally applicable to states and non-state armed groups" (Diakonia 2021). International organizations also take similar positions against IHL violations by rebel groups. For example, the United Nations labeled the FDLR (*Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda*) as an 'illegitimate armed group' due to the group's responsibility for "grave human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law"[33].

Rebel Aspirations for International Legitimacy and Recruitment

Understanding how aspirations for international legitimacy shape rebel practices is essential for explaining why some groups resort to forced recruitment. International audiences—including foreign states, international organizations, and human rights lobbies—are particularly concerned about rebel-led atrocities and human rights violations[34]. Numerous examples of rebel groups expressing adherence to IHL norms highlight their awareness of how their actions impact global reputation. Moreover, existing research suggests that rebel groups aspiring for international legitimacy are more likely to comply with IHL norms regarding the targeting of civilians[35].

The 2014 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights investigation into LTTE's forced recruitment indicates that international audiences view forced recruitment as both a human rights violation and an atrocity crime[36]. Consequently, rebel groups seeking international legitimacy may avoid forced recruitment to align with IHL norms and prevent punitive actions or loss of support.

However, I argue that, unlike previous studies on rebel violence against civilians, aspirations for international legitimacy do not necessarily lead to abandoning forced recruitment. The relationship between legitimacy-seeking and avoiding forced recruitment is likely more nuanced than with restraint shown in targeting civilians. Rebels can achieve their objectives, exert control, and enforce compliance among civilian populations without resorting to widespread violence. A growing

[32](Amnesty International UK 2007)
[33](UN News Service 2014)
[34](Salehyan, Siroky and Wood 2014)
[35](Jo 2015; Stanton 2016; Fazal 2018; Balcells and Stanton 2021)
[36]See Walsh, Conrad and Whitaker (2023) for a discussion of various forms of human rights violations that rebels may commit, including forced recruitment.

body of literature argues that non-lethal and less-lethal violence strategies are often more effective in controlling civilian populations[37]. Furthermore, both coercive and conciliatory forms of rebel governance can secure civilian compliance[38], demonstrating that while the tactical use of unrestrained violence against civilians may serve strategic functions, it is neither a prerequisite for rebel group survival nor the sole means to induce civilian cooperation.

Unlike unrestrained violence, recruitment is an indispensable aspect of any rebellion, not just a tactical choice but a foundational requirement for rebel group survival. To sustain the rebellion, groups must mobilize and maintain a sufficiently large armed force[39]. Without a sufficiently large force, they have minimal prospects for survival, defeating the government, extracting concessions, or securing a role in the post-war political order[40]. Moreover, international recognition can also depend on rebels' ability to deploy large armies and achieve military success. For instance, Szentkirályi and Burch (2017) argue that the size of a rebel army can act as a proxy for its perceived legitimacy within the international community, finding that international actors are more inclined to intervene on behalf of larger rebel movements. Furthermore, Landau-Wells (2018) finds that groups capable of deploying armies large enough to seize control of the capital city are more likely to receive international recognition than others.

Such empirical evidence suggests that even international legitimacy-seeking groups with reputational incentives to refrain from human rights violations can be tempted to resort to forced recruitment to mobilize large armies. In other words, the indispensable need for new recruits compels rebel groups to weigh their recruitment practices against their aspirations for international legitimacy and balance the imperative for survival against the potential for international backlash.

This is not to imply that the imperative for survival inevitably results in forced recruitment. After all, forced recruitment is not the sole strategy available to rebel groups for maintaining a recruitment pipeline. Groups may offer material incentives to attract fighters[41] or employ ideological appeals and persuasion to mobilize voluntary recruits[42]. However, the effectiveness of these strategies can vary depending on groups' resource bases. Material incentives, while potentially ef-

[37](Gilbert 2022; Welsh 2023; Liu and Eisner 2024)
[38](Mampilly 2011; Gutiérrez-Sanín 2015; Terpstra and Frerks 2017; Revkin 2020)
[39](Mosinger 2018)
[40](Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan 2009; Nilsson 2010; Gent 2011; Akcinaroglu 2012; Nygård and Weintraub 2015)
[41](Weinstein 2007)
[42](Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014; Soules 2023)

fective, may be limited by the group's access to lucrative resources and/or assistance from foreign supporters, as many rebel groups operate with constrained financial means. Similarly, the success of ideological appeals depends on the resonance of the group's ideology with potential recruits and the ability to effectively disseminate these messages.

In particular, certain rebel ideologies, such as exclusionary ethnic nationalism and radical religious beliefs, advocate for a rigid distinction between 'insiders,' who are potential recruits, and 'others,' who are viewed as adversaries rather than potential converts to the cause[43]. Such ideological exclusivity limits groups' appeal to a specific segment of the population, significantly narrowing the pool of potential recruits. Even when a group's ideology is inclusive enough to appeal to a broad spectrum of individuals, the success of ideological appeals in mobilizing recruits often depends on the pre-existing ties between rebel groups and civilian communities and the effectiveness of these ties in spreading ideological messages from clandestine organizations to the public. Ideological appeals can drive collective action, with individuals aligned with the rebel group's ideology being more inclined to join voluntarily. However, a substantial and expanding body of literature that explores how pre-war social origins influence groups' future trajectories highlights complexities in the apparently straightforward relationship between rebel ideological persuasion and recruitment patterns. Below, I discuss how rebels' pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations can successfully boost both ideologically-driven voluntary recruitment and materially-motivated recruitment, thereby creating a conducive environment for legitimacy-seeking rebels to respond to the imperative for organizational survival while also refraining from recruitment practices violating IHL norms.

Pre-War Rebel Ties to Civilian-Led Organizations

Although rebel groups claim to fight ideologically-driven wars on behalf of civilian constituencies (e.g., ethnic, religious, or ideological groups)[44], membership in these ideologically-defined constituencies does not automatically lead to voluntary involvement in the rebel group[45]. Two primary factors restrict the effectiveness of ideological persuasion in rebel recruitment of civil-

[43](Asal and Rethemeyer 2008; Polo and Gleditsch 2016)
[44](Akcinaroglu and Tokdemir 2018)
[45](Petersen 2001; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Mosinger 2018)

ian constituencies. First, nascent rebel groups, often operating as clandestine organizations in remote areas, lack access to mainstream media, limiting their ability to disseminate their ideological messages broadly[46]. Second, individuals' "ideological commitments and motivations are often tenuous, uneven, contingent, episodic, and ambivalent"[47], making it difficult to rely exclusively on ideological persuasion to attract recruits. Given these two limitations, rebel groups often leverage pre-war social networks to recruit members voluntarily[48].

Networks play a crucial role in high-risk mobilization, as individuals are often influenced by their social ties to those who join the rebellion[49]. Consequently, rebel groups primarily recruit through established social networks, with initial members using personal relationships—such as kinship, friendship, and community ties—to spread their message and enlist new members[50]. For instance, the PFLP (*Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine*) and the DFLP (*Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine*) often drew recruits from the same families[51]. Similarly, the PKK in Turkey used pre-existing friendship ties to recruit university students and then relied on family and kinship connections to bring in these members' relatives[52]. These initial recruitment pools often create path dependencies, influencing the group's future recruitment efforts[53]. For instance, the PKK struggled to expand its recruitment beyond these initial social circles and failed to attract volunteers from the Alevite-Kurdish populations[54]. As Staniland (2012, p. 150) notes, rebels "go to war with the networks they have."

While many rebel groups are presumably built upon their leaders' networks, not all possess pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations that enable broad recruitment. Some groups emerge from government forces, private or foreign mercenaries, or criminal gangs[55], while others develop from political parties, social movements, student groups, religious organizations, or labor unions[56]. Rebel groups with pre-war ties to civilian organizations are more "socially embedded" in pre-war

[46](Larson and Lewis 2018)
[47](Parkinson 2021, p. 7)
[48](Parkinson 2013; Seymour 2014)
[49](Centola and Macy 2007; Siegel 2009)
[50](Petersen 2001; Parkinson 2013; Larson and Lewis 2018)
[51](Parkinson 2013)
[52](Aydin and Emrence 2015)
[53](McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; Sageman 2004)
[54](Aydin and Emrence 2015, p. 64)
[55](Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020)
[56](Sarbahi 2014; Staniland 2014)

political processes and mobilization efforts[57]. This embedding allows them to "repurpose" these connections for wartime recruitment[58][59].

Pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations help rebel groups overcome challenges in spreading their ideological messages and recruiting volunteers, even while operating clandestinely. These ties are crucial for leveraging interactions with civilians into substantial recruitment advantages, and are delineated by three principal attributes: (1) pre-existing connections[60], (2) civilian-led communities, and (3) pre-war organizations[61]. Notably, pre-war ties to formal, civilian-led organizations are generally more beneficial for recruitment than ties to loosely knit civilian communities or non-civilian groups (e.g., soldiers, government officials, militias)[64]. Pre-war ties to civilian organizations enhance rebel efforts to boost ideologically-driven voluntary recruitment through three principal mechanisms: by providing rebels with pre-established *networks for disseminating ideological appeals*, by establishing the foundations of *communal trust and credibility*, and by fostering *collective political convictions that favor violent mobilization*.

First, pre-war ties offer rebels a vital network for disseminating ideological appeals directly within their constituent populations, bypassing conventional mass communication channels that are typically under stringent state control. These civilian networks, rooted in pre-existing, trusted

[57](Sarbahi 2014, p. 1474)

[58](Staniland 2014, p. 17)

[59]In this context, groups with pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations conceptually resemble Sarbahi (2014)'s *anchored groups* and Staniland (2014)'s *integrated insurgent organizations*.

[60]For rebel groups lacking pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations, attempting to establish such connections post-conflict may appear to be a strategic maneuver to enhance voluntary recruitment. However, this approach often proves less effective compared to pre-existing affiliations. Firstly, the ideologies and goals of newly formed rebel groups may not align with those of civilian-led organizations, particularly if these organizations are dedicated to nonviolent action and wary of the potential legal and reputational risks associated with supporting armed groups. Secondly, civilian organizations may harbor skepticism regarding the motives of newly affiliated rebel groups, questioning whether the rebels are genuinely advancing civilian interests or merely pursuing their own agendas. Such skepticism can obstruct the development of meaningful connections necessary for effective recruitment. Moreover, governments may respond to the emergence of new rebel groups by intensifying efforts to co-opt or neutralize civilian-led organizations, thereby limiting the rebels' ability to garner civilian support.

[61]Rebel groups lacking pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations might attempt to boost voluntary recruitment by subjugating existing unaffiliated civilian organizations into their command structure. This strategy can grant them access to established networks and mobilized individuals. However, its effectiveness likely depends on the rebels' ability to achieve full territorial control and the degree of prior state penetration and community cohesion in the areas where these organizations operate[62]. Territorial control allows rebels to integrate civilian organizations into their recruitment efforts while reducing government interference, but without such control, civilian organizations may maintain their autonomy and resist rebel influence. Even when rebels consolidate territorial control, civilians may still exercise "oppositional agency" to resist unwelcome rebel demands[63].

[64]Similarly, Staniland (2014) argues that not all social bases possess the necessary political orientation to effectively transform pre-war networks into rebel organizations. Some networks may lack political mobilization or face coordination challenges due to weak ties between geographically dispersed actors.

communication channels, are crucial for both spreading information and persuading potential recruits, while also safeguarding operational secrecy as recruitment efforts intensify[65]. By leveraging these established ties, rebel groups can effectively shield their messages from government counter-propaganda. The shared grievances formed before the rebellion bolster resistance to state narratives, making individuals within these networks more resistant to government messages and more receptive to the rebels' ideological appeals.

Second, civilian-led organizations with established pre-war histories offer a foundation of trust and credibility that is often lacking amid the chaos and trauma of war[66]. Trust and credibility are fundamental for successful high-risk mobilization, and organizational affiliations are particularly effective in cultivating these emotional bonds[67]. Pre-war organizations also play a vital role in 'collectively framing the threat' posed by the government[68]. This collective threat framing leverages the pre-existing trust and credibility, as individuals are more likely to accept and act upon narratives crafted by sources they already trust. By aligning the threat with shared grievances and pre-war affiliations and drawing upon established emotional bonds to reinforce and unify support for the rebel cause, this framing deepens the commitment of potential recruits and mobilizes them more effectively towards the rebellion[69]. Additionally, these organizations can facilitate important feedback loops between rebel groups and the communities they seek to recruit from. The trust and credibility built through pre-war affiliations can enable these organizations to effectively gather and relay community feedback on the rebels' ideological appeals and convey additional concerns from civilian constituencies, allowing rebels to refine their recruitment strategies based on community input. This feedback can enable a more adaptive and responsive propaganda strategy, bolstering the rebels' recruitment efforts[70].

Finally, the presence of pre-war mobilization within civilian-led organizations can foster collective political convictions favoring violent mobilization, creating community expectations for high-risk actions and influencing individuals' decisions to join the rebel group voluntarily[71]. Pre-

[65](Larson and Lewis 2018)
[66](De Luca and Verpoorten 2015; Kijewski and Freitag 2018; Ingelaere and Verpoorten 2020; Lewis and Topal 2023)
[67](Parkinson 2021)
[68](Shesterinina 2016)
[69](Shesterinina 2016)
[70]See Mampilly and Stewart (2021) and van Baalen (2021) for a discussion on how rebel leaders incorporate feedback from trusted community leaders and local elites into their practices.
[71](Aliyev 2021)

war mobilization fosters a collective identity centered around shared grievances which can help set social norms that valorize resistance and create social pressure to conform, making rebellion a socially endorsed and expected behavior. By normalizing these communal norms, individuals may be increasingly motivated to join the rebellion due to peer influence and societal obligations[72]. Such pre-war mobilization patterns also provide rebels with insights into the specific grievances, political aspirations, and cultural expectations of their civilian constituencies. This understanding can enable rebel groups to tailor their ideological appeals to better resonate with potential recruits. By aligning their messages with the deeply held concerns and aspirations of the community, rebels can significantly enhance the effectiveness of their propaganda and increase their ability to attract a large number of volunteers.

The impact of pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations arguably extends beyond merely enhancing voluntary recruitment; it also has the potential to influence rebel prospects for securing external state sponsorship, which can, in turn, be leveraged to bolster materially-motivated recruitment efforts. The ability to maintain a steady influx of voluntary recruits demonstrates a rebel group's organizational capacity. Furthermore, the mechanisms through which pre-war ties enhance ideologically-driven voluntary recruitment—by facilitating the dissemination of messages, establishing trust and credibility, and fostering collective political convictions— underscore rebels' integration within civilian communities. This integration can provide a humanitarian rationale for external sponsors to justify their support.

External state support for rebel groups is often driven by strategic objectives, particularly the desire to destabilize and gain coercive leverage over target states[73]. While external patrons might occasionally support weak rebels due to principal-agent concerns[74], they typically prefer more capable partners who can effectively utilize resources[75]. Rebels' ability to consistently recruit voluntary fighters, which demonstrates both a level of organizational efficiency and integration with local communities, can, thus, be a key factor in their attractiveness to external patrons. Rebel organizational efficiency signals that the group has an organizational structure capable of sustaining itself and managing the conflict effectively. Such capability reduces the risk for external patrons

[72](Edgerton 2022; Nussio 2024)
[73](Findley and Teo 2006; Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham 2011; Bapat 2012; San-Akca 2016; Tamm 2016; Lee 2018)
[74](Qiu 2022)
[75](Salehyan 2010; Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham 2011)

that the conflict will spiral out of control and backfire on the patron[76]. A high level of voluntary recruitment, on the other hand, suggests that the rebels are deeply integrated with the local civilian population, which can enhance their ability to influence and destabilize the target state. This aligns with the patrons' strategic objective of weakening adversarial states[77].

Moreover, the successful recruitment of local fighters can bolster the narrative that the rebel group is not merely a military entity but a legitimate representative of local interests and aspirations. This narrative can serve as a form of humanitarian justification for external support, potentially addressing the moral and ethical concerns that often accompany backing armed groups. The moral hazard of supporting rebels arises due to the increased risk of escalated violence, prolonged conflicts, and unintended consequences such as civilian casualties and regional instability[78], which can damage the patron's reputation and increase the risk of international condemnation and punishment for offering support to armed groups[79]. By presenting their support as an endorsement of a legitimate social actor rather than a mere tool for destabilizing a rival state, patrons can mitigate these hazards and reduce potential reputational repercussions, enabling them to pursue their geopolitical goals with reduced risk of negative consequences[80].

External support can furnish rebels with the resources necessary to provide monetary incentives to potential recruits beyond their initial societal reach. This expanded support base enables rebels to bolster materially-driven recruitment efforts, thereby supplementing their ideologically-driven recruitment and amplifying overall recruitment capacity without necessitating forced recruitment. Figure 1 summarizes the theoretical arguments discussed, illustrating how pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations facilitate both ideologically-driven and materially-motivated recruitment.

Balancing Aspirations for International Legitimacy and Constraints on Recruitment

International legitimacy-seeking groups with pre-war ties to civilian organizations have the potential to bolster voluntary recruitment within their communities through their societal embed-

[76](Carter 2015)
[77](San-Akca 2016; Tamm 2016; Lee 2018)
[78](Hazen 2013; Kaplow 2016; Karlén 2017; Sawyer, Cunningham and Reed 2017; Petrova 2019)
[79](Salehyan, Siroky and Wood 2014; Carter 2015)
[80](Lee 2018)

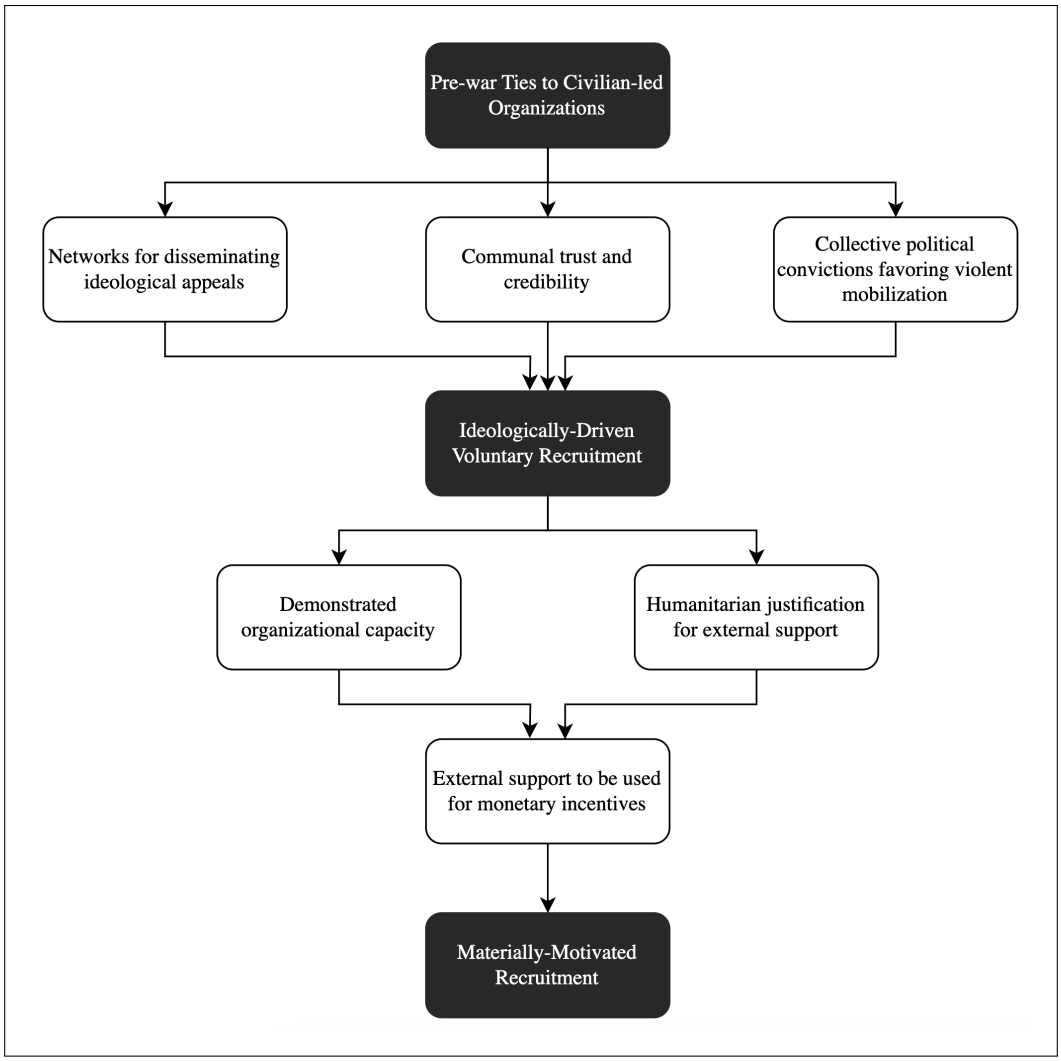

Figure 1. How Pre-War Ties Bolster Voluntary and Materially-Motivated Recruitment

dedness, while simultaneously facilitating materially-motivated recruitment beyond their initial outreach by leveraging financial support from external patrons seeking organizationally capable agents for whom support can be justified on humanitarian grounds. Consequently, these groups occupy a distinctive position wherein their disincentives to engage in forced recruitment are congruent with an absence of positive incentives that might otherwise stem from limitations on voluntary recruitment.The combination of aspirations for international legitimacy and access to pre-war organizational networks, which enable the mobilization of substantial numbers of both voluntary and materially motivated recruits, significantly diminishes their motivations for forced recruitment. The advantages associated with voluntary recruitment—such as an enhanced international reputation—coupled with the pre-war rebel-civilian connections that facilitate this process, far surpass

the immediate benefits of forced recruitment, thereby obviating the necessity for such practices. This alignment allows these groups to adhere to IHL standards without jeopardizing their operational viability[81].

Conversely, international legitimacy-seeking groups lacking pre-war ties to civilian organizations face a complex calculus; devoid of a foundational support base, these groups must construct their fighting power from the ground up, often struggling to establish the social infrastructure necessary to effectively engage potential recruits, disseminate ideological appeals, and foster trust and collective identity. Unlike their counterparts with pre-existing connections to civilian organizations, these groups must navigate the tension between their political aspirations for legitimacy and the pressing need for recruits, which may be constrained. Consequently, they may prioritize immediate recruitment over long-term legitimacy and exhibit reluctance to commit to international humanitarian laws (IHL), fearing that adherence could compromise their military-strategic effectiveness[82]. The exigencies of warfare exacerbate this dilemma, as the urgent need for fighters to sustain operations or maintain political relevance compels these groups towards the expedient option of forced recruitment[83]—despite its contradictions with their long-term legitimacy objectives.[86]

The LTTE in Sri Lanka exemplifies how a legitimacy-seeking group without pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations may resort to forced recruitment to offset its inability to mobilize a significant number of voluntary recruits. The LTTE epitomized a group striving for international legitimacy, with its political wing leader, S. P. Thamilselvan, frequently engaging in diplomatic visits to European nations and meeting with foreign ministries[89]. However, in stark contrast to

[81](Mosinger 2018)

[82](Fazal and Konaev 2019)

[83]Legitimacy-seeking groups without pre-war ties that resort to forced recruitment must integrate forcibly recruited fighters into a coherent entity to mitigate principal-agent issues[84]. Non-compliance among forced recruits can lead to further atrocities, damaging the group's international reputation; however, militant organizations can adopt strategies to regulate member conduct. By fostering a new identity through ideological indoctrination, systematic socialization, and 'self-criticism' sessions, they can align individual preferences with leadership goals[85].

[86]These groups need to grapple with the reputational costs of forced recruitment that could outweigh strategic benefits. They may employ two key strategies to mitigate these costs: first, complementing coercive actions with rebel governance to project an image of community service; for instance, Flynn and Stewart (2018) demonstrates that inclusive social service provision can alleviate the reputational repercussions of civilian casualties. Second, these groups often rebrand forced recruitment as conscription—a recognized practice among nation-state armies[87]. The LTTE, the PKK and Maoist insurgents in Nepal exemplified this with their 'one person per family' conscription policies[88]. While human rights organizations may discern these rebranding efforts, they can temporarily assist international legitimacy-seeking rebels in countering accusations of human rights abuses.

[89](Klem and Maunaguru 2017, p. 639)

its aspirations for international legitimacy, the LTTE undertook extensive campaigns of forced recruitment domestically (UNHCHR 2015).

The origins of the LTTE elucidate this apparent paradox. Staniland (2014) notes that the LTTE was established by a small elite group from the Karaiyar caste of Tamils, characterized by strong horizontal ties among its leaders but tenuous or nonexistent vertical connections to civilian communities. Crucially, there is no evidence of any pre-war affiliations with mobilized civilian-led institutions, indicating that "the LTTE began as a vanguard organization, operating as a small group without substantial local institutionalization"[90]. Mobilizing mass support without such ties for voluntary recruitment proved to be a challenge, as foreign observers in Tamil-majority areas noted that "the LTTE's political hold on the population has always been precarious"[91]. Consequently, despite the LTTE's significant efforts to legitimize itself through social service provision, civilian compliance was often coerced rather than voluntary[92]. Lacking pre-war connections to civilian organizations that could provide a pool of potential voluntary recruits, the LTTE resorted to coercive tactics in its interactions with civilians. By 2004, forced recruitment had become so pervasive that Harendra de Silva, chair of the National Child Protection Authority in Sri Lanka, stated that 18 out of 19 child and teen recruits in the LTTE had been abducted[93].

Finally, rebel groups that neither seek international legitimacy nor maintain pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations are particularly predisposed to employ forced recruitment, as the constraints of international norms are minimized or nonexistent in their context. The case of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda exemplifies this phenomenon; the LRA's disregard for international legitimacy, coupled with a lack of pre-war connections to civilian organizations[94], has led to brutal campaigns of abduction targeting children to sustain its ranks[96].

Even when such groups possess pre-war ties to civilian organizations, they may still resort to coercive recruitment due to their indifference toward international legitimacy, especially if significant battlefield losses and the corresponding urgent demand for new recruits surpass the rate

[90](Staniland 2014, p. 150)
[91](Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1994, p. 120)
[92](Terpstra and Frerks 2017)
[93](Becker 2004, p. 16)
[94]The LRA's origins are often traced to a spiritual military movement known as the Holy Spirit Movement, founded by the self-proclaimed spiritual medium Alice Lakwena[95].
[96](Human Rights Watch 2004)

of voluntary recruitment[97]. The PKK's recruitment strategies throughout its prolonged conflict in Turkey illustrate this dynamic. Originating from a student organization known as the Ankara (Democratic) Higher Education Association[98], the PKK initially enjoyed pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations that positioned it favorably for voluntary recruitment; however, its primary focus on mobilizing a substantial army capable of seizing territory, rather than on garnering international legitimacy, meant that it was not constrained by aspirations for a positive international reputation. From the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, the PKK implemented large-scale forced recruitment, declaring that "at least one person from every Kurdish family" should be enlisted[99], with every Kurdish youth aged 18 to 25 mandated to join the PKK army under its compulsory conscription law. Families that refused to comply faced sanctions from the PKK[100]. Notably, 85 percent of forced recruits joined the PKK between 1987 and 1989[101]. However, by the mid-1990s, as the PKK intensified its quest for international legitimacy through the establishment of informal embassies, foreign offices, governments-in-exile, and engagement with international media, it gradually phased out its systematic conscription policy[102].

Groups with pre-war ties, such as the PKK, which have evolved in their approach to seeking international legitimacy, demonstrate that such connections do not inherently disincentivize non-legitimacy-seeking rebels from engaging in forced recruitment. However, aspirations for international legitimacy can significantly alter coercive recruitment practices if these groups are well-integrated with potential recruitment pools via pre-war ties. Conversely, groups lacking such connections, like the LTTE, illustrate that aspirations for international legitimacy alone do not deter forced recruitment unless groups possess sufficient societal connections to potential recruits to enable adequate voluntary recruitment. Ultimately, the groups most effectively positioned to be both *willing* and *able* to refrain from forced recruitment are those that possess both aspirations for international legitimacy and pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations.

Hence;

Hypothesis 1: Rebel groups that seek international legitimacy and have pre-war ties

[97](Eck 2014)
[98](Marcus 2007*b*)
[99](Ocalan 1995)
[100](Yılmaz 2019)
[101](Tezcur 2016)
[102](Marcus 2007*a*)

to civilian-led organizations should be less likely than other rebel groups to resort to forced recruitment.

Table 1 illustrates the predictions of the theoretical argument. The theory posits that international legitimacy-seeking groups with pre-war ties should exhibit minimal incentives for forced recruitment. In contrast, the incentive structures for other group types exhibit greater variability, with such groups potentially facing either medium or high incentives for coercive recruitment. For instance, groups devoid of aspirations for legitimacy or pre-war ties (or both) may encounter strong incentives for forced recruitment if they lack the capacity to provide material incentives to attract fighters[103]. Conversely, if they are able to offer such incentives, presumably thanks to their exploitation of natural resources, their coercive recruitment incentives may diminish to a moderate level.

Table 1. Likelihood of Forced Recruitment by Rebels

	Pre-War Ties to civilian-led organizations	
	No pre-war organization	Pre-war organization
Aspirations for International Legitimacy		
Not legitimacy-seeking	Moderate/High	Moderate/High
Legitimacy-seeking	Moderate/High	Low

Research Design

I examine the relationship between aspirations for international legitimacy, pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations, and rebel forced recruitment using data on rebel diplomacy and organizational origins. The dataset includes 115 rebel groups that contributed at least 25 battle-related deaths in civil wars with a minimum of 1,000 deaths between 1990 and 2018. This sample comes from the overlap between the Rebel Human Rights Violations Dataset (RHRV), the Foundation of Rebel Group Emergence Dataset (FORGE), and the Rebel Quasi-State Institutions Dataset. The unit of analysis is the rebel group-government dyad-year (N = 797). This dataset is ideal for exploring the link between international legitimacy-seeking and forced recruitment, as it covers post-Cold

[103](Weinstein 2005, 2007)

War civil wars[104] where the intensity of violence was significant enough to draw attention from international actors, and expectations of adherence to international humanitarian law were higher than during the Cold War[106].

Rebel Forced Recruitment

My main dependent variable, FORCED RECRUITMENT, reflects whether a rebel group used forced recruitment in a given year. I code group-government dyad-years as 1 if the rebel group forcibly recruited individuals (adults or children of any gender) and 0 otherwise. This data is adapted from the Rebel Human Rights Violations (RHRV) Dataset[107], which draws on US State Department Country Reports on Human Rights and Amnesty International's Annual Reports[108].

The RHRV Dataset defines forced recruitment as "forcing individuals to perform work for the organization against their will"[109], including both combatants and civilian labor. My measure of forced recruitment thus covers compulsory conscription, child abduction, and forced civilian labor, including prostitution. This comprehensive measure is crucial for testing my hypothesis, as forced civilian labor could affect a group's international reputation similarly to combatant conscription[110]. Appendices 3 through 6 offer additional models with alternative forced recruitment measures, such as an ordinal scale, Cohen (2013)'s data, and a child recruitment measure. Findings remain consistent across these measures.

FORCED RECRUITMENT occurred in 240 rebel group-government dyad-years (30 percent), with 39 of 115 groups (34 percent) engaging in forced recruitment at least once. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of dyad-years with rebel engagement in forced recruitment. The incidence has increased over time, which may indicate the growing importance of large armies for rebels. Alternatively, it could reflect a reporting bias, as documentation of human rights violations in civil wars may have risen with increased transnational advocacy. To account for potential biases, I follow Walsh, Conrad and Whitaker (2023)'s recommendation in Appendix 10 and estimate my main

[104] Following standard operationalizations of civil war[105], the dataset focuses on conflicts in which fighting led to at least 1,000 battle-related deaths.
[106] (Stanton 2020, p. 539)
[107] (Walsh, Conrad and Whitaker 2023)
[108] The main analysis uses US State Department data. Appendix 3 provides robustness checks with Amnesty International data, yielding comparable results.
[109] (Walsh, Conrad and Whitaker 2023, p. 5)
[110] For example, ISIS' enslavement of Yazidi women drew significant international media attention[111].

models with time controls. The results remain consistent.

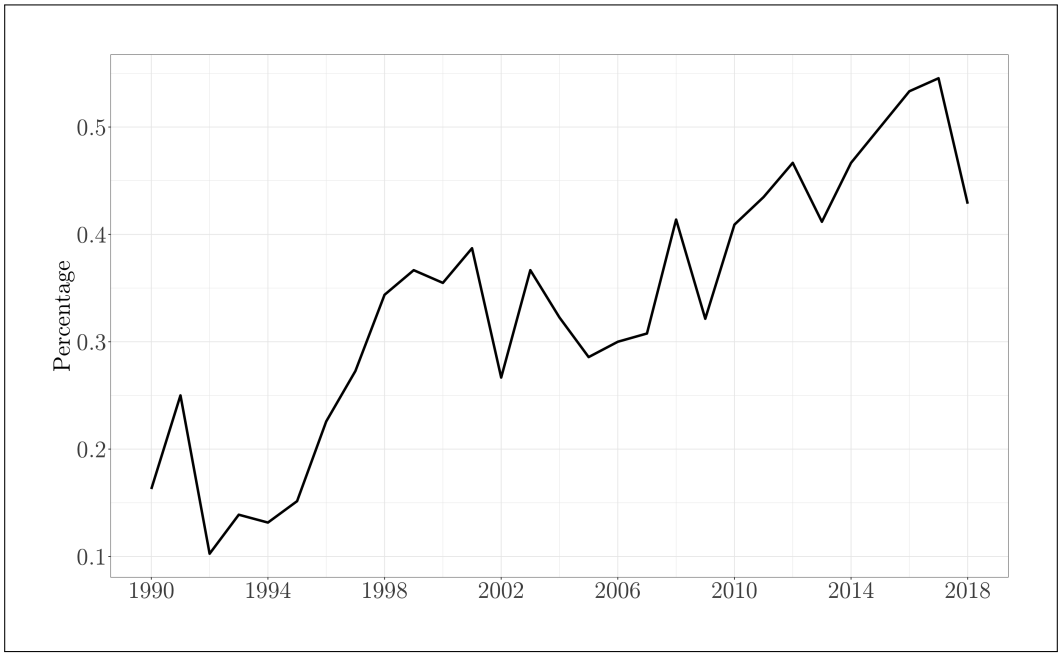

Figure 2. Prevalence of Forced Recruitment by Rebel Groups Over Time
Note: The y-axis displays the percentage of dyad-years in which rebels engaged in forced recruitment, out of the total number of dyad-years.

Another potential reporting bias could stem from varying levels of attention by agencies like the US State Department across different regions. As shown in Table 2, in Latin America, where the US State Department likely focuses more attention, 64 percent of dyad-years reportedly involved forced recruitment. In contrast, despite expectations of similar attention in the Middle East, only 15 percent of dyad-years show reports of forced recruitment. Yet, the relatively low prevalence in Africa—despite qualitative studies documenting extensive forced recruitment by rebels[112]—raises concerns about under-reporting in certain countries. To address this, Appendix 11 presents models controlling for the region of operation. The results remain consistent.

Table 2. Forced Recruitment by Rebel Groups in Dyad-Years Across Regions

	Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America	Middle East
No forced recruitment	182 (68%)	217 (72%)	15 (94%)	27 (36%)	115 (85%)
Forced recruitment	86 (32%)	84 (28%)	1 (6%)	48 (64%)	21 (15%)

[112](Richards 2014)

Key Independent Variables

The theoretical argument focuses on how rebel aspirations for international legitimacy and their social origins shape their incentives for forced recruitment. I use two key independent variables at the group level: INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY-SEEKING and PRE-WAR TIES TO CIVILIAN-LED ORGANIZATIONS. My hypothesis posits that rebel groups pursuing international legitimacy and with pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations are less likely to use forced recruitment. Therefore, my analysis includes both variables and their interaction to directly test this hypothesis.

INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY-SEEKING

INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY-SEEKING measures whether a rebel group actively sought international recognition in a given year. While directly observing this behavior is difficult, a group's efforts to conduct international affairs, diplomacy, and engagement with foreign states and interstate organizations indicate its investment in international legitimacy[113]. Building on this insight, I proxy rebel groups' international legitimacy-seeking with data on rebel membership in international organizations, diplomatic missions, and the formation of a government-in-exile.

Information on rebel diplomacy comes from the Rebel Quasi-State Institutions dataset[114][115]. Albert (2022) coded whether a rebel group: (1) was a member of an international organization[117], (2) sent representatives abroad[119], or (3) formed a government-in-exile. For instance, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) was part of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) appointed foreign representatives to engage with foreign governments or politicians[121].

INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY-SEEKING is coded as 1 if a rebel group was a member of an international organization, engaged in diplomacy, or formed a government-in-exile, and 0 otherwise. 149 dyad-years (19 percent) included legitimacy-seeking groups, with 24 of 115 groups (21

[113](Coggins 2015; Huang 2016*b*)
[114](Albert 2022)
[115]The dataset covers 235 rebel groups active from 1945 to 2012, as identified in the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Termination dataset v4[116]. The legitimacy-seeking variable is based on the dataset's *Pol_JoinIO*, *Pol_Embassy*, and *Gov_in_Exile* variables.
[117]Some intergovernmental organizations require formal state recognition for membership, while others include both state and non-state actors. Testimonies at the UN are not considered for this variable[118].
[119]Representatives may establish embassies or engage informally with foreign governments[120].
[121](Byman et al. 2001)

Table 3. Conditional Distribution of the DV on the Key Independent Variables

		International legitimacy-seeking	Not international legitimacy-seeking
No forced recruitment	Pre-war organization	60 (8.6 percent)	139 (20.1 percent)
	No pre-war organization	49 (7.2 percent)	245 (35.5 percent)
Forced recruitment	Pre-war organization	8 (1.2 percent)	71 (10.2 percent)
	No pre-war organization	32 (4.6 percent)	87 (12.5 percent)

percent) engaging in such behavior at least once. Table 3 shows that of the 149 dyad-years with legitimacy-seeking groups, 40 dyad-years (26 percent) involved forced recruitment, compared to 158 of 542 dyad-years (29 percent) for non-legitimacy-seeking groups. This provides the initial evidence that international legitimacy-seeking may not straightforwardly deter forced recruitment.

Notably, my INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY-SEEKING variable has 13 percent missing data. The Rebel Quasi-State Institutions dataset marks dyad-years as missing if sources contain "questionable sources, unclear wording or dates"[122], meaning allegations of rebel activities are unrecorded unless confirmed by multiple sources. This may result in some instances of rebel diplomacy being unaccounted for. However, focusing on confirmed cases provides a rigorous test of the hypothesis, as the argument centers on the effects of seeking public support from international audiences rather than covert support through private channels[123]. Appendix 7 presents robustness checks using secessionist aspirations as an alternative proxy for legitimacy-seeking[124]. The results are consistent across different legitimacy measures.

PRE-WAR TIES TO CIVILIAN-LED ORGANIZATIONS

PRE-WAR TIES TO CIVILIAN-LED ORGANIZATIONS assess whether a rebel group originated from a pre-existing 'parent' organization[126] formed and led by civilians before the war. Many rebel groups stem from political parties, movements, student organizations, or labor unions, which, as the theoretical argument suggests, allow rebels to covertly disseminate ideology and persuade voluntary recruits[127], while also demonstrating organizational capacity. In contrast, some groups

[122](Albert 2022, p. 627)
[123](Salehyan, Siroky and Wood 2014)
[124]Literature suggests independence-seeking groups are more likely to pursue international legitimacy[125].
[126](Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020, 2024)
[127](Larson and Lewis 2018; Shesterinina 2016)

emerge from non-civilian-led organizations like former armed forces or mercenary groups, or from loosely organized civilian communities, such as refugee groups, without pre-defined structures[128]. The absence of pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations limits a group's voluntary recruitment pool and hinder its ability to mobilize collective support for violence.

Building on this framework, I measure rebel groups' pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations using data from the Foundations of Rebel Group Emergence (FORGE) dataset[129][130]. The dataset focuses on the organizational origins of groups' initial membership. I code PRE-WAR TIES TO CIVILIAN-LED ORGANIZATIONS as 1 if a group emerged from a political party, political movement, student/youth group, labor/trade union, religious organization, or other social organization, and 0 otherwise. Table 4 outlines the coding rules. Rebel groups originating from non-civilian-led pre-war organizations, such as government armed forces or foreign fighters, are not coded as having ties to civilian-led organizations. Although these groups may have military expertise, they often lack the community ties that aid voluntary recruitment[131]. Similarly, groups from loosely-knit communities, like refugee groups, are not considered to have pre-war ties, as these communities may lack the political motivation and organizational structure for efficient recruitment[132].

The time-invariant nature of my measure of ties to civilian-led organizations may raise questions about whether groups can expand their voluntary recruitment networks over time, beyond their initial 'parent' organizations. However, literature suggests that rebel groups face significant constraints in expanding their voluntary recruitment pool beyond the networks they relied on during their formative years[133]. Therefore, I argue that this measure of social origins adequately captures how limited voluntary recruitment pools incentivize forced recruitment for international legitimacy-seeking groups without strong pre-war communal ties, especially given the lack of cross-national data on annual recruitment pool sizes. Moreover, research using similar conceptualizations of pre-war social origins shows that parent organizations influence future conflict

[128](Staniland 2014, p. 17)
[129](Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020)
[130]The FORGE dataset provides information on the origins of rebel groups active in civil conflicts with at least 25 battle-related deaths from 1946 to 2011. The unit of observation is the rebel group. I constructed the PRE-WAR TIES TO CIVILIAN-LED ORGANIZATIONS variable using FORGE's *preorgpar, preorgmvt, preorgyou, preorglab, preorgrel, preorgoth* variables.
[131](Braithwaite and Cunningham 2024)
[132](Staniland 2014)
[133](Staniland 2012, 2014; Aydin and Emrence 2015)

Table 4. Coding Rules for Pre-War Ties to Civilian-Led Organizations

Value		Source of the initial membership
1	Pre-war ties	A political party A non-party political movement A student/youth group A labor/trade union A religious organization Another type of social organization
0	No pre-war ties	The government's current armed forces The government's former armed forces A non-military government faction A group of foreign fighters/mercenaries A rebel group included in the UCDP dataset A terrorist group not included in the UCDP dataset A refugee/exiled community An ethnic group No pre-existing origin

trajectories, affecting casualties[134], conflict duration[135], government concessions[136], and democratization[137].

In my sample of 115 groups, 36 (31 percent) had pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations. A list of these 'parent' organizations is included in Appendix 13. Of the 797 dyad-years, 313 (39 percent) involved a group with pre-war ties. Table 3 provides initial evidence that pre-war ties condition the relationship between international legitimacy-seeking and forced recruitment. Of the 68 dyad-years involving a group with both international legitimacy aspirations and pre-war ties, only 8 (12 percent) resorted to forced recruitment. In contrast, 32 of 81 dyad-years (44 percent) involving legitimacy-seeking groups without pre-war ties relied on forced recruitment.

Control Variables

The selection of controls is informed by how groups' social origins and legitimacy-seeking strategies align with existing theories of forced recruitment. At the group level, I draw on literature

[134](McLauchlin 2023)
[135](Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020)
[136](Braithwaite and Cunningham 2024)
[137](Pinckney, Butcher and Braithwaite 2022)

exploring how rebel characteristics shape tactics[138]. I control for ideology-related factors, starting with the extent to which a group employs IDEOLOGICAL APPEALS over material incentives for recruitment, using ordinal data from the Rebel Appeals and Incentives Database[139]. Groups that rely on ideological appeals tend to exhibit stronger internal cohesion, which correlates with lower levels of human rights abuses[140].

Additionally, I control for group ideology (MARXIST, RELIGIOUS-ORIENTED, ETHNIC-BASED) using binary indicators from the FORGE dataset. Religious-oriented groups often avoid forced recruitment due to screening strategies that require upfront sacrifices[141], while forced recruitment is more common among Marxist groups[142]. I also account for RELATIVE REBEL STRENGTH, an ordinal measure from the Non-State Actor dataset[143], as forced recruitment may serve as a tactic of weaker groups[144], though such groups often face challenges in enforcing penalties for desertion[145].

In my extended models, I include additional group-level controls. NATURAL RESOURCE EXPLOITATION, measured using data from the Rebel Contraband Dataset[146], is controlled for as access to resource revenues can influence recruitment strategies[147]. I also account for the presence of a POLITICAL WING, a dichotomous indicator from the Non-State Actor dataset[148], as such wings, tied to legitimacy-seeking, may reduce reliance on forced recruitment[149]. TERRITORIAL CONTROL, another binary indicator, reflects how exclusive territorial control increases military capacity[150] and signals credibility[151], attracting voluntary recruits. Lastly, I control for SEXUAL VIOLENCE using the Rebel Human Rights Violations Dataset[152][153], as sexual violence can signal weak command structures, leading to forced recruitment by opportunistic commanders.

[138](Huang 2016*a*; Stewart and Liou 2017)
[139](Soules 2023)
[140](Weinstein 2007; Haer 2015; Hoover Green 2016, 2018)
[141](Berman 2003; Best and Bapat 2018)
[142](Eck 2014; Sawyer and Andrews 2020)
[143](Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan 2009)
[144](Gates 2017)
[145](Sawyer and Andrews 2020)
[146](Walsh et al. 2018)
[147](Weinstein 2005, 2007; Faulkner, Powell and Lasley 2019; Haer, Faulkner and Whitaker 2020)
[148](Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan 2009)
[149](Sawyer and Andrews 2020; Faulkner and Doctor 2021)
[150](De La Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca 2015)
[151](Kubota 2011)
[152](Walsh, Conrad and Whitaker 2023)
[153]The Rebel Human Rights Violations Dataset adapted this measure from the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflicts[154] dataset, based on Amnesty International reports.

At the conflict level, I include BATTLE-RELATED DEATHS, measured using the log-transformed average number of deaths per year from the UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset[155], as higher casualties increase recruitment demand[156]. Extended models also control for country-level factors: DEMOCRACY, GDP PER CAPITA, YOUTH POPULATION, and YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT, measured using the 20-point Polity index, GDP data from Gleditsch (2002), and World Bank Indicators. Nondemocratic, developing countries with large unemployed youth populations may offer rebel groups a vulnerable pool for forced recruitment[157].

Results

Table 5 displays the logistic regression analyses examining the likelihood of rebel groups resorting to forced recruitment in a given year. Model 1 provides the basic model specification, incorporating the two key independent variables along with their interaction. Model 2 introduces controls related to ideology and conflict intensity, while Models 3 and 4 extend the analysis by integrating additional group- and country-level control variables. To maintain focus on the main findings, the extended controls are detailed in Appendix 2, rather than reported directly in Table 5.

The results across all four models provide robust evidence in support of my primary hypothesis: aspirations for international legitimacy, when coupled with pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations, shape rebel incentives to avoid forced recruitment. The interaction term, LEGITIMACY-SEEKING*PRE-WAR TIES, is both statistically significant and negative, aligning with theoretical expectations. This negative coefficient indicates that when both conditions—aspirations for legitimacy and pre-war ties—are present, the likelihood of forced recruitment decreases significantly compared to scenarios where only one or neither factor is in play. In essence, the combined influence of these two factors creates a stronger deterrent against forced recruitment than their individual effects, underscoring the critical role of legitimacy-seeking and organizational ties in influencing rebel behavior.

To further elucidate this key finding, Figure 2 presents the average marginal effects of INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY-SEEKING as conditioned by groups' social origins. The figure reveals a

[155](Gleditsch et al. 2002)
[156](Haer and Böhmelt 2017)
[157](Tynes and Early 2015)

Table 5. Social Origins, Legitimacy-Seeking and Forced Recruitment, 1990-2018

	DV: Forced Recruitment by Rebels			
	(1) Basic Model	(2) Control Variables	(3) Additional Controls	(4) Country Controls
International legitimacy-seeking	0.609**	0.460	0.761**	0.279
	(0.259)	(0.297)	(0.343)	(0.419)
Pre-war organizational ties of civilians	0.364*	0.328	0.344	0.245
	(0.192)	(0.264)	(0.357)	(0.373)
Legitimacy-seeking * Pre-war ties	−1.952***	−1.530***	−1.307**	−1.040*
	(0.480)	(0.523)	(0.582)	(0.630)
Ideological appeals		0.148	0.339**	0.262*
		(0.110)	(0.140)	(0.151)
Marxist		0.833***	1.196***	1.297***
		(0.264)	(0.330)	(0.405)
Religious		−0.700***	−0.658**	−0.666*
		(0.264)	(0.333)	(0.376)
Ethnic		−1.018***	−1.552***	−1.541***
		(0.246)	(0.336)	(0.349)
Battle-related deaths		0.391***	0.292**	0.308**
		(0.098)	(0.122)	(0.142)
Relative rebel strength		0.972***	1.075***	1.293***
		(0.151)	(0.194)	(0.226)
Constant	−1.035***	−5.407***	−6.599***	−0.479
	(0.125)	(0.830)	(1.014)	(6.541)
Additional Group-Level Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Additional Country-Level Controls	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	691	662	656	639
Log Likelihood	−404.291	−326.906	−264.512	−257.740
Akaike Inf. Crit.	816.582	673.812	557.025	551.481

Note 1: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note 2: Additional group-level and country-level controls in Models 3 and 4 are not reported to save space. Full table presented in Appendix 2.

conditional relationship that aligns closely with my theoretical expectations. When rebel groups lack pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations, aspirations for legitimacy do not produce a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of forced recruitment. However, as predicted, when such pre-war ties are present, the average marginal effect of INTERNATIONAL LEGITIMACY-SEEKING becomes both negative and significant, indicating a reduction in the likelihood of forced recruitment.

Figure 2 also illustrates the predicted probabilities of forced recruitment, contingent upon both legitimacy-seeking behavior and social origins. These probabilities provide compelling evidence in favor of my theoretical argument. First, rebel groups that seek international legitimacy and have pre-war ties to civilian organizations are significantly less likely to engage in forced recruitment, with a predicted probability of just 12 percent. By comparison, the predicted probabilities for other groups range from 22 to 31 percent, reinforcing the distinct influence of legitimacy-seeking when coupled with pre-war ties. Second, it is only this specific combination of international legitimacy aspirations and pre-war ties that meaningfully discourages forced recruitment. The overlapping confidence intervals for all other group types—except those with both legitimacy aspirations and pre-war ties—demonstrate that legitimacy-seeking alone does not statistically reduce the likelihood of forced recruitment when such ties are absent. This finding corroborates my theoretical argument that aspirations for international legitimacy dampen the incentives for forced recruitment only when rebel groups can leverage their pre-war connections to civilian organizations to facilitate voluntary recruitment. In sum, the groups most capable and inclined to avoid forced recruitment are those that seek international legitimacy and have pre-war ties, positioning them as willing and able to pursue alternative recruitment strategies.

The remaining results align closely with established findings in the literature on forced recruitment. First, MARXIST groups are significantly more likely to engage in forced recruitment, while RELIGIOUS-ORIENTED groups exhibit a lower propensity for this tactic, consistent with prior research[158]. Furthermore, groups that rely primarily on IDEOLOGICAL APPEALS rather than material incentives are more prone to forced recruitment.

Second, the results confirm the argument that forced recruitment plays a vital role for groups seeking to quickly replenish battlefield losses. The positive and statistically significant coefficient

[158](Best and Bapat 2018; Eck 2014; Sawyer and Andrews 2020)

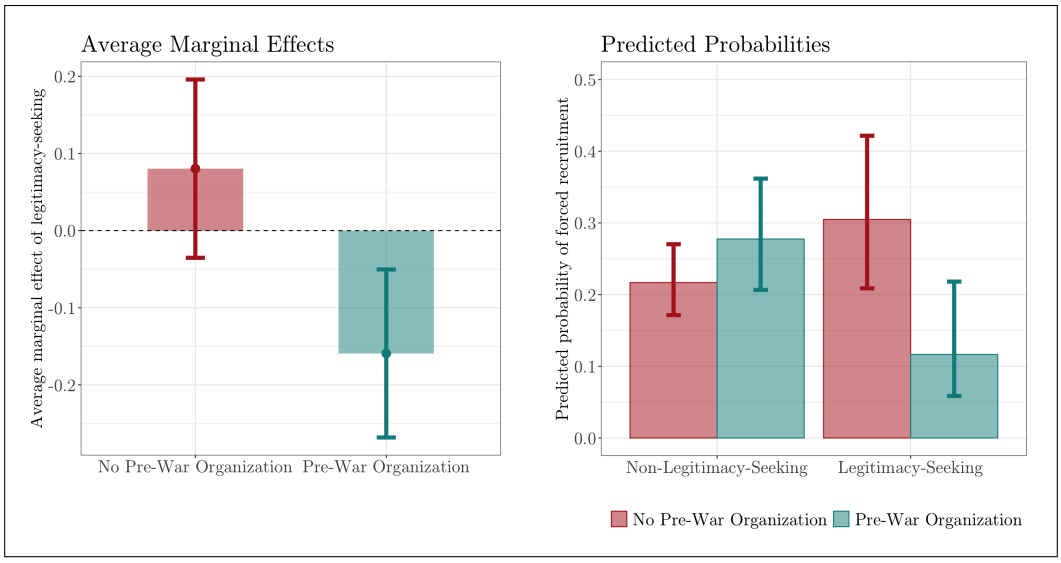

Figure 3. Interaction Effects

Note: The left-hand side of the figure shows the average marginal effect of international legitimacy-seeking conditional on social origins. The right-hand side shows the predicted probabilities of forced recruitment. The average marginal effects and predictions are based on Model 2. All control variables are held at their means or medians. Confidence intervals reflect robust standard errors clustered on rebel group.

on the BATTLE-RELATED DEATHS variable substantiates this claim, aligning with previous analyses[159]. Additionally, RELATIVE REBEL STRENGTH is found to have a positive and significant association with forced recruitment, challenging the prevailing notion that this tactic is a "weapon of the weak". This outcome is consistent with both Sawyer and Andrews (2020)'s findings and my theoretical story, suggesting that even stronger rebel groups may resort to forced recruitment under certain conditions.

Third, the extended models (3 and 4) reinforce existing findings on the influence of group-level characteristics. For example, NATURAL RESOURCE EXPLOITATION is shown to increase the likelihood of forced recruitment, in line with previous studies[160]. Similarly, the presence of POLITICAL WINGS is negatively associated with forced recruitment, further corroborating prior research that links political wings to legitimacy-seeking behavior[161].

[159](Eck 2014; Haer and Böhmelt 2017)
[160](Faulkner, Powell and Lasley 2019; Haer, Faulkner and Whitaker 2020)
[161](Faulkner and Doctor 2021)

Robustness Checks

The robustness checks presented in the Appendices demonstrate the strength of my findings across several alternative specifications. These include: (a) using an alternative measure of forced recruitment derived from Amnesty International's Annual Reports, (b) employing an ordinal measure of forced recruitment, (c) introducing another binary measure based on Cohen (2013) data, (d) focusing on the forced recruitment of children as the dependent variable, (e) testing an alternative measure of international legitimacy-seeking defined by whether groups pursue secessionist objectives, and (f) utilizing alternative group-ideology controls, including feminist appeals, ideologies against resource exploitation, opposition to government repression, and resistance to foreign intervention.

Additionally, the robustness checks incorporate (g) alternative group-level controls for other human rights violations, such as arbitrary killings and property violations, (h) controls for the presence of competition from rival groups, (i) time controls, and (j) regional controls. These supplementary models provide a validation of the main results, underscoring the consistency of my theoretical claims across various operationalizations and contextual factors.

The findings remain robust across a range of alternative measures and model specifications. The interaction between international legitimacy-seeking and pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations consistently yields a negative and significant effect. Notably, models incorporating alternative group-level controls for human rights violations further bolster confidence in these results. For instance, even after accounting for arbitrary killings and property violations by rebel groups, as shown in Appendix 9, the legitimacy-seeking variable continues to exert a significant negative impact on forced recruitment, but only for groups with pre-war ties. This reinforces the argument that the presence of pre-war organizational ties is critical to understanding the influence of legitimacy-seeking on recruitment strategies.

Additionally, the models in Appendix 13 demonstrate the robustness of these findings even when inter-group competition is considered, a factor that could otherwise shift recruitment tactics as groups compete with rivals for potential recruits[162]. These results confirm that the combined influence of legitimacy-seeking and pre-war ties holds strong, regardless of the competitive dynamics

[162](Onder 2024)

among rebel groups.

To further rule out the possibility that the findings are merely reflective of groups' general tendency to commit atrocities, I conduct an additional analysis focused on sexual violence by rebel groups. In Appendix 12, I model the probability of sexual violence using the same set of predictors and find no significant interaction effects between the two key independent variables. This indicates that the dynamics observed in my analysis of forced recruitment are distinct and not simply a byproduct of rebels' broader proclivity for committing human rights violations. These results suggest that the interaction between international legitimacy-seeking and social origins uniquely shapes incentives for forced recruitment. The absence of similar effects in the sexual violence models reinforces my argument that this relationship is specific to how rebel groups formulate recruitment strategies in light of their aspirations for international legitimacy. It further underscores that groups' social origins play a pivotal role in moderating the influence of legitimacy-seeking on recruitment tactics, driven by the need to balance reputational considerations with constraints tied to their recruitment pools, as theorized.

Conclusion

Forced recruitment by rebel organizations is a pervasive and profoundly damaging form of victimization in civil conflict zones. While this practice is widespread in many civil wars, the extent to which rebel groups employ forced recruitment varies significantly. This variation is driven by the distinct incentive structures groups face. Rebel organizations seeking international legitimacy are particularly motivated to avoid forced recruitment, as adherence to humanitarian law helps them cultivate a favorable global image. However, these groups must balance their quest for legitimacy with the urgent need to expand their ranks, a challenge often exacerbated by limited access to voluntary recruits. These recruitment constraints are influenced by the groups' social origins, particularly their pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations.

Pre-war connections to civilian-led organizations provide rebel groups with platforms to disseminate their ideology and mobilize volunteers, thereby reducing the necessity for coercive recruitment tactics. Consequently, rebel groups aspiring to international legitimacy and possessing pre-war ties to civilian organizations are strategically positioned to minimize their reliance on

forced recruitment. This argument is empirically substantiated by an analysis of 115 rebel groups active in civil wars between 1990 and 2018, demonstrating that the combination of legitimacy-seeking behavior and pre-war ties significantly reduces the likelihood of rebels forcibly conscripting civilians.

Some important caveats should be noted. This analysis focuses on 115 rebel groups involved in civil wars with at least 1,000 battle-related deaths, raising questions about the generalizability of these findings to lower-intensity conflicts. Rebel groups engaged in such conflicts may operate under different incentive structures, where the mobilization of large armed forces is less critical. Nevertheless, this study offers valuable insights into rebel recruitment strategies within high-intensity conflicts, where human rights abuses tend to be more pronounced.

This research suggests several promising trajectories for future research. First, my findings resonate and extend other scholars' work on the impact of armed groups' social origins on their future trajectories[163]. Future research should incorporate an analysis of group origins and examine how pre-war social ties may influence the hypothesized relationships, particularly given the profound impact these ties exert on groups' primary recruitment pools. This line of inquiry can elucidate the conditions under which rebel groups are more adept at challenging state sovereignty and how contested governance materializes in the lives of civilians within conflict zones.

Secondly, I have illustrated the potential of leveraging data on rebel governance to study theories surrounding groups' quest for international legitimacy. However, the growing use of the Internet and social media by such groups[164] suggests new avenues for building international support. Future studies could explore how rebels exploit these non-traditional channels to gain legitimacy and justify their activities to a global audience. Investigating these efforts can provide insights into how non-state actors negotiate their status and recognition in the international system. This line of research will plausibly contribute to ongoing discussions on how legitimacy is constructed and contested in the international arena.

[163] (Parkinson 2013; Staniland 2014; Sarbahi 2014; Lewis 2017; Larson and Lewis 2018; Braithwaite and Cunningham 2024)

[164] (Bestvater and Loyle 2024)

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Appendix

Contents

Summary Statistics

Summary statistics for the variables included in the main models presented in Table 5 of the manuscript are presented below.

Table A.1. Summary Statistics

	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Min.	Max.
Forced recruitment by rebels	797	0.30	0.46	0	0	1
International legitimacy-seeking	691	0.22	0.41	0	0	1
Embedment in niche social networks	797	0.54	0.50	1	0	1
Ideological appeals	768	1.39	0.5	1	0	2
Marxist	797	0.32	0.47	0	0	1
Religious	797	0.33	0.47	0	0	1
Ethnic	797	0.54	0.5	1	0	1
Battle-related deaths	793	6.29	1.17	6.33	1.04	8.59
Relative rebel strength	768	1.74	0.71	2	1	5
Natural resource exploitation by rebels	796	0.61	0.49	1	0	1
Political-wing	796	0.36	0.48	0	0	1
Territorial control by rebels	795	0.44	0.5	0	0	1
Sexual violence by rebels	752	0.12	0.33	0	0	1
Democracy	782	12.29	5.59	13	1	20
GDP per capita (log-transformed)	796	7.84	0.98	7.82	5.78	10.18
Youth population (log-transformed)	793	3.63	0.21	3.64	2.94	3.9
Youth unemployment rate	789	14.44	11.9	8.84	0.5	50.74

Main Results

Table 5 of the manuscript did not report the coefficients on the additional control variables to save space. Full table is reported below.

Table A.2. Social Origins, Legitimacy-Seeking and Forced Recruitment

	DV: Forced Recruitment by Rebels			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
International legitimacy-seeking	0.609**	0.460	0.761**	0.279
	(0.259)	(0.297)	(0.343)	(0.419)
Pre-war organizational ties of civilians	0.364*	0.328	0.344	0.245
	(0.192)	(0.264)	(0.357)	(0.373)
Legitimacy-seeking*Pre-war ties	−1.952***	−1.530***	−1.307**	−1.040*
	(0.480)	(0.523)	(0.582)	(0.630)
Ideological appeals		0.148	0.339**	0.262*
		(0.110)	(0.140)	(0.151)
Marxist		0.833***	1.196***	1.297***
		(0.264)	(0.330)	(0.405)
Religious		−0.700***	−0.658**	−0.666*
		(0.264)	(0.333)	(0.376)
Ethnic		−1.018***	−1.552***	−1.541***
		(0.246)	(0.336)	(0.349)
Battle-related deaths		0.391***	0.292**	0.308**
		(0.098)	(0.122)	(0.142)
Relative rebel strength		0.972***	1.075***	1.293***
		(0.151)	(0.194)	(0.226)
Natural resource exploitation by rebels			1.185***	1.009***
			(0.278)	(0.290)
Political-wing			−1.169***	−1.098***
			(0.316)	(0.340)
Territorial control by rebels			0.656***	0.574**
			(0.250)	(0.259)
Sexual violence by rebels			2.399***	2.433***
			(0.379)	(0.396)
Democracy				−0.010
				(0.039)
GDP per capita (log-transformed)				−0.090
				(0.321)
Youth population (log-transformed)				−1.524
				(1.214)
Youth unemployment rate				0.015
				(0.015)
Constant	−1.035***	−5.407***	−6.599***	−0.479
	(0.125)	(0.830)	(1.014)	(6.541)
Observations	691	662	656	639
Log Likelihood	−404.291	−326.906	−264.512	−257.740
Akaike Inf. Crit.	816.582	673.812	557.025	551.481

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Amnesty International's Annual Reports

The main models used a binary measure of forced recruitment relying on the US State Department Country Reports on Human Rights from the Rebel Human Rights Violations (RHRV) Dataset[165]. The models reported below use an alternative binary measure relying on the Amnesty International's Annual Reports, taken from the RHRV dataset.

Table A.3. Social Origins, Legitimacy-Seeking and Forced Recruitment

	DV: Forced Recruitment by Rebels			
	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
International legitimacy-seeking	0.771***	0.539*	0.799**	0.246
	(0.262)	(0.299)	(0.342)	(0.415)
Pre-war organizational ties of civilians	0.504**	0.393	0.324	0.244
	(0.196)	(0.269)	(0.361)	(0.376)
Legitimacy-seeking*Pre-war ties	−2.093***	−1.697***	−1.459**	−1.139*
	(0.481)	(0.524)	(0.574)	(0.618)
Ideological appeals		0.177	0.353**	0.265*
		(0.113)	(0.140)	(0.152)
Marxist		0.956***	1.330***	1.252***
		(0.266)	(0.331)	(0.403)
Religious		−0.687**	−0.536	−0.512
		(0.268)	(0.331)	(0.373)
Ethnic		−0.883***	−1.263***	−1.213***
		(0.248)	(0.326)	(0.338)
Battle-related deaths		0.396***	0.274**	0.303**
		(0.100)	(0.123)	(0.142)
Relative rebel strength		0.936***	0.974***	1.228***
		(0.152)	(0.190)	(0.223)
Natural resource exploitation by rebels			1.068***	0.843***
			(0.277)	(0.287)
Political-wing			−0.972***	−0.810**
			(0.309)	(0.334)
Territorial control by rebels			0.729***	0.647**
			(0.250)	(0.260)
Sexual violence by rebels			2.195***	2.296***
			(0.359)	(0.380)
Democracy				0.016
				(0.039)
GDP per capita (log-transformed)				−0.044
				(0.320)
Youth population (log-transformed)				−1.574
				(1.212)
Youth unemployment rate				0.016
				(0.015)
Constant	−1.197***	−5.675***	−6.630***	−1.096
	(0.130)	(0.853)	(1.014)	(6.562)
Observations	691	662	656	639
Log Likelihood	−392.456	−321.664	−266.163	−259.286
Akaike Inf. Crit.	792.911	663.328	560.326	554.571

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

[165](Walsh, Conrad and Whitaker 2023)

Ordinal Measure of Forced Recruitment

The ordered logistic regression results below use a three-point ordinal measure of the prevalence of forced recruitment adopted from the Rebel Human Rights Violations (RHRV) Dataset[166]. The group-government dyad-years in which the rebel group frequently or systematically resorted to forced recruitment are coded as 2, occasionally or infrequently forcibly recruited are coded as 1, and 0 otherwise. 557 dyad-years are coded as 1, 84 dyad-years are coded as 2, and 156 dyad-years are coded as 2. The main findings are robust to this alternative measure and modeling strategy.

Table A.4. Social Origins, Legitimacy-Seeking and Forced Recruitment

	DV: Forced Recruitment by Rebels			
	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
International legitimacy-seeking	0.440*	0.174	0.324	−0.114
	(0.249)	(0.286)	(0.319)	(0.401)
Pre-war organizational ties of civilians	0.415**	0.427*	0.477	0.417
	(0.190)	(0.258)	(0.343)	(0.352)
Legitimacy-seeking*Pre-war ties	−1.896***	−1.435***	−1.221**	−0.971
	(0.473)	(0.515)	(0.573)	(0.619)
Ideological appeals		0.123	0.270**	0.191
		(0.106)	(0.132)	(0.142)
Marxist		0.770***	1.179***	1.194***
		(0.255)	(0.308)	(0.377)
Religious		−0.901***	−0.894***	−0.952***
		(0.263)	(0.320)	(0.358)
Ethnic		−1.070***	−1.588***	−1.591***
		(0.241)	(0.320)	(0.330)
Battle-related deaths		0.417***	0.283**	0.297**
		(0.098)	(0.118)	(0.133)
Relative rebel strength		0.916***	1.006***	1.199***
		(0.145)	(0.182)	(0.209)
Natural resource exploitation by rebels			1.290***	1.106***
			(0.275)	(0.286)
Political-wing			−1.254***	−1.208***
			(0.303)	(0.324)
Territorial control by rebels			0.817***	0.724***
			(0.236)	(0.245)
Sexual violence by rebels			1.971***	1.936***
			(0.311)	(0.325)
Democracy				−0.002
				(0.037)
GDP per capita (log-transformed)				−0.044
				(0.294)
Youth population (log-transformed)				−0.979
				(1.138)
Youth unemployment rate				0.017
				(0.013)
Observations	691	662	656	639
Log Likelihood	−527.822	−438.670	−370.268	−363.282

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

[166](Walsh, Conrad and Whitaker 2023)

Alternative Data on Forced Recruitment

The logistic regression models reported below uses an alternative binary measure of forced recruitment relying on Cohen (2013)'s data.

Table A.5. Social Origins, Legitimacy-Seeking and Forced Recruitment

	DV: Forced Recruitment by Rebels			
	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15	Model 16
International legitimacy-seeking	−0.731***	−0.910***	−0.972***	−1.866***
	(0.254)	(0.311)	(0.329)	(0.415)
Pre-war organizational ties of civilians	0.729***	0.559**	1.199***	1.132***
	(0.197)	(0.249)	(0.313)	(0.343)
Legitimacy-seeking*Pre-war ties	−1.230***	−0.868*	−1.199**	−0.607
	(0.401)	(0.455)	(0.527)	(0.622)
Ideological appeals		−0.097	−0.064	0.024
		(0.099)	(0.105)	(0.131)
Marxist		0.973***	0.980***	0.348
		(0.286)	(0.330)	(0.391)
Religious		1.531***	1.461***	0.865**
		(0.285)	(0.354)	(0.429)
Ethnic		−0.369	−0.441	−0.900***
		(0.236)	(0.278)	(0.319)
Battle-related deaths		0.147*	0.071	0.412***
		(0.083)	(0.092)	(0.125)
Relative rebel strength		1.777***	2.147***	2.633***
		(0.191)	(0.232)	(0.276)
Natural resource exploitation by rebels			1.337***	1.144***
			(0.240)	(0.274)
Political-wing			−0.996***	−0.412
			(0.280)	(0.317)
Territorial control by rebels			−0.302	−0.407
			(0.266)	(0.293)
Sexual violence by rebels			0.556	0.738*
			(0.407)	(0.420)
Democracy				0.020
				(0.034)
GDP per capita (log-transformed)				0.668**
				(0.263)
Youth population (log-transformed)				−1.085
				(1.011)
Youth unemployment rate				0.006
				(0.016)
Constant	0.357***	−3.693***	−4.448***	−8.512
	(0.116)	(0.765)	(0.873)	(5.505)
Observations	665	662	656	639
Log Likelihood	−421.892	−337.235	−299.865	−266.097
Akaike Inf. Crit.	851.784	694.470	627.731	568.195

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Forced Recruitment of Children

The logistic regression models reported below uses forced recruitment of children as the dependent variable. This measure is adapted from[167] data, an expanded version of the Child Soldier (CSDS) Dataset collected by Haer and Böhmelt (2016).

Table A.6. Social Origins, Legitimacy-Seeking and Recruitment of Children

	DV: Forced Recruitment by Rebels			
	Model 17	Model 18	Model 19	Model 20
International legitimacy-seeking	2.135***	1.694***	2.375***	4.033***
	(0.439)	(0.471)	(0.575)	(0.714)
Pre-war organizational ties of civilians	0.549***	1.097***	1.544***	2.711***
	(0.190)	(0.267)	(0.396)	(0.515)
Legitimacy-seeking*Pre-war ties	−2.200***	−2.437***	−2.981***	−4.595***
	(0.536)	(0.611)	(0.765)	(0.905)
Ideological appeals		0.159	0.489***	0.801***
		(0.109)	(0.134)	(0.179)
Marxist		0.941***	0.300	0.425
		(0.311)	(0.399)	(0.479)
Religious		−2.161***	−2.725***	−2.848***
		(0.289)	(0.403)	(0.503)
Ethnic		−1.438***	−1.823***	−2.232***
		(0.280)	(0.367)	(0.426)
Battle-related deaths		0.711***	0.418***	0.584***
		(0.096)	(0.109)	(0.144)
Relative rebel strength		0.940***	0.827***	0.241
		(0.167)	(0.210)	(0.246)
Natural resource exploitation by rebels			2.871***	3.429***
			(0.305)	(0.405)
Political-wing			−0.736**	−1.543***
			(0.358)	(0.408)
Territorial control by rebels			1.501***	1.731***
			(0.328)	(0.420)
Sexual violence by rebels			0.742	0.418
			(0.612)	(0.635)
Democracy				0.074*
				(0.040)
GDP per capita (log-transformed)				0.334
				(0.367)
Youth population (log-transformed)				9.317***
				(1.695)
Youth unemployment rate				−0.038**
				(0.018)
Constant	0.390***	−4.909***	−5.304***	−43.559***
	(0.112)	(0.797)	(0.920)	(8.777)
Observations	691	662	656	639
Log Likelihood	−411.208	−294.220	−207.580	−161.928
Akaike Inf. Crit.	830.417	608.439	443.161	359.856

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

[167] (Faulkner and Doctor 2021)

Alternative Proxy of Legitimacy-Seeking

Fazal (2018) find that groups that seek diplomatic support and recognition from international audiences are more likely than others to exercise restraint in their targeting of civilians. This suggests that independence-seeking groups, since they need recognition, are likely more concerned about seeking international legitimacy. Using this insight, I proxy international legitimacy-seeking on the part of rebel groups with group goals calling for independence. Data on groups' independence-seeking comes from the Foundations of Rebel Group Emergence (FORGE) dataset[168]. I code this alternative measure of international legitimacy-seeking as 1 if a given group seeks independence, and 0 otherwise. My main findings are robust to this alternative measure.

Table A.7. Social Origins, Legitimacy-Seeking and Forced Recruitment

	DV: Forced Recruitment by Rebels			
	Model 21	Model 22	Model 23	Model 24
International legitimacy-seeking	−0.610***	−0.298	0.140	−0.418
	(0.215)	(0.276)	(0.354)	(0.425)
Pre-war organizational ties of civilians	0.356*	0.093	0.409	0.260
	(0.191)	(0.269)	(0.373)	(0.395)
Legitimacy-seeking*Pre-war ties	−0.993***	−0.634	−1.360**	−0.958*
	(0.374)	(0.419)	(0.534)	(0.564)
Ideological appeals		0.141	0.288**	0.245*
		(0.102)	(0.133)	(0.144)
Marxist		1.125***	1.368***	1.384***
		(0.242)	(0.319)	(0.391)
Religious		−0.556**	−0.788**	−0.699*
		(0.234)	(0.323)	(0.366)
Ethnic		−0.734***	−1.145***	−1.041***
		(0.235)	(0.327)	(0.352)
Battle-related deaths		0.337***	0.237**	0.234*
		(0.088)	(0.116)	(0.133)
Relative rebel strength		0.881***	1.038***	1.266***
		(0.138)	(0.184)	(0.205)
Natural resource exploitation by rebels			1.260***	0.992***
			(0.273)	(0.296)
Political-wing			−1.141***	−1.057***
			(0.315)	(0.332)
Territorial control by rebels			0.692***	0.652***
			(0.236)	(0.249)
Sexual violence by rebels			2.495***	2.651***
			(0.366)	(0.389)
Democracy				−0.002
				(0.039)
GDP per capita (log-transformed)				−0.117
				(0.285)
Youth population (log-transformed)				−2.275**
				(1.067)
Youth unemployment rate				0.015
				(0.013)
Constant	−0.653***	−4.820***	−6.164***	2.832
	(0.122)	(0.740)	(0.946)	(5.785)
Observations	797	765	720	703
Log Likelihood	−466.754	−388.975	−286.374	−277.083
Akaike Inf. Crit.	941.508	797.951	600.747	590.167
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

[168](Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020)

Alternative Group Ideology Controls

In my main models, I control for group ideology using four measures: groups' degree of ideological appeals for recruitment, Marxist ideology, religious ideology, and ethnic-based ideology. As robustness checks, I replace these ideology measures with alternative ones: feminist appeals, ideology against external exploitation of resources, appeals against violent government repression, and ideology against foreign military intervention. All four binary indicators come from the Rebel Appeals and Incentives Database[169]. My main findings are robust to these alternative measures of group ideology.

Table A.8. Social Origins, Legitimacy-Seeking and Forced Recruitment

	DV: Forced Recruitment by Rebels			
	Model 25	Model 26	Model 27	Model 28
International legitimacy-seeking	0.609**	0.508	0.740*	0.129
	(0.259)	(0.312)	(0.381)	(0.437)
Pre-war organizational ties of civilians	0.364*	0.967***	0.808***	0.525
	(0.192)	(0.234)	(0.301)	(0.331)
Legitimacy-seeking*Pre-war ties	−1.952***	−1.884***	−1.696***	−1.307**
	(0.480)	(0.513)	(0.566)	(0.614)
Feminist appeals		1.478***	0.984**	1.001**
		(0.335)	(0.436)	(0.454)
Anti-resource exploitation		−1.903*	−3.077***	−3.312***
		(1.048)	(1.174)	(1.206)
Anti-government violence		0.228	0.922***	0.991***
		(0.269)	(0.324)	(0.339)
Anti-external intervention		−0.316	−0.116	−0.310
		(0.268)	(0.297)	(0.336)
Battle-related deaths		0.237**	−0.028	0.015
		(0.094)	(0.115)	(0.128)
Relative rebel strength		0.806***	0.538***	0.951***
		(0.144)	(0.176)	(0.223)
Natural resource exploitation by rebels			1.492***	1.220***
			(0.280)	(0.292)
Political-wing			−0.162	−0.042
			(0.251)	(0.267)
Territorial control by rebels			0.673***	0.663**
			(0.249)	(0.264)
Sexual violence by rebels			2.440***	2.589***
			(0.384)	(0.398)
Democracy				0.088***
				(0.034)
GDP per capita (log-transformed)				0.114
				(0.265)
Youth population (log-transformed)				−0.082
				(1.172)
Youth unemployment rate				0.017
				(0.014)
Constant	−1.035***	−4.396***	−3.864***	−6.436
	(0.125)	(0.686)	(0.804)	(5.829)
Observations	691	656	650	633
Log Likelihood	−404.291	−337.018	−273.177	−264.060
Akaike Inf. Crit.	816.582	694.036	574.354	564.120

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

[169](Soules 2023)

Controls for Other Human Rights Violations

In my original models, I control for a variety of group-level factors that could influence forced recruitment as well as groups' international legitimacy-seeking, including natural resource exploitation by rebels, territorial control by rebels, sexual violence by rebels, political-wing of rebel groups. As robustness checks, I replace these group-level controls with alternative controls regarding other atrocities by rebels: arbitrary killings, and property violation by rebels. Data on atrocities by rebels come from the Rebel Human Rights Violations Dataset[170] and relies on the US State Department Country Reports on Human Rights. All alternative group-level controls are ordinal measures of the extent of atrocities committed by rebels where 0 indicates the lack of such atrocities, 1 indicates infrequent use of such atrocities, and 2 indicates widespread or systematic use. My main findings are robust to these alternative group-level controls.

Table A.9. Social Origins, Legitimacy-Seeking and Forced Recruitment

	DV: Forced Recruitment by Rebels			
	Model 29	Model 30	Model 31	Model 32
International legitimacy-seeking	0.609**	0.460	0.802**	0.659
	(0.259)	(0.297)	(0.354)	(0.429)
Pre-war organizational ties of civilians	0.364*	0.328	0.494	0.422
	(0.192)	(0.264)	(0.332)	(0.367)
Legitimacy-seeking*Pre-war ties	−1.952***	−1.530***	−1.413**	−0.971
	(0.480)	(0.523)	(0.607)	(0.653)
Ideological appeals		0.148	0.038	0.003
		(0.110)	(0.137)	(0.151)
Marxist		0.833***	0.505	0.328
		(0.264)	(0.322)	(0.422)
Religious		−0.700***	−0.554*	−0.735**
		(0.264)	(0.299)	(0.347)
Ethnic		−1.018***	−0.784**	−0.889***
		(0.246)	(0.313)	(0.330)
Battle-related deaths		0.391***	0.337***	0.320**
		(0.098)	(0.116)	(0.138)
Relative rebel strength		0.972***	0.699***	0.842***
		(0.151)	(0.185)	(0.217)
Arbitrary killings by rebels			1.212***	1.203***
			(0.175)	(0.188)
Property violations by rebels			0.656***	0.768***
			(0.155)	(0.162)
Democracy				0.033
				(0.041)
GDP per capita (log-transformed)				0.154
				(0.324)
Youth population (log-transformed)				1.817
				(1.145)
Youth unemployment rate				0.029*
				(0.015)
Constant	−1.035***	−5.407***	−6.304***	−14.842**
	(0.125)	(0.830)	(0.981)	(6.503)
Observations	691	662	662	645
Log Likelihood	−404.291	−326.906	−250.026	−236.844
Akaike Inf. Crit.	816.582	673.812	524.052	505.688

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

[170](Walsh, Conrad and Whitaker 2023)

Temporal Controls

To account for potential reporting biases which may cause temporal discrepancies in my measure of forced recruitment by rebels, I estimate our main models, presented in Table 5 of the manuscript, with time-controls. My main findings are robust to controlling for time.

Table A.10. Social Origins, Legitimacy-Seeking and Forced Recruitment

	DV: Forced Recruitment by Rebels			
	Model 33	Model 34	Model 35	Model 36
International legitimacy-seeking	0.810***	0.654**	0.914**	0.367
	(0.274)	(0.324)	(0.363)	(0.442)
Pre-war organizational ties of civilians	0.512**	0.674**	0.766*	0.685*
	(0.201)	(0.290)	(0.394)	(0.411)
Legitimacy-seeking*Pre-war ties	−2.389***	−2.243***	−2.071***	−1.656**
	(0.499)	(0.566)	(0.640)	(0.693)
Ideological appeals		0.063	0.293*	0.180
		(0.121)	(0.152)	(0.161)
Marxist		0.858***	1.284***	1.497***
		(0.287)	(0.362)	(0.444)
Religious		−0.920***	−1.026***	−0.990**
		(0.288)	(0.366)	(0.401)
Ethnic		−1.044***	−1.589***	−1.563***
		(0.263)	(0.351)	(0.364)
Battle-related deaths		0.412***	0.303**	0.305**
		(0.110)	(0.135)	(0.152)
Relative rebel strength		1.249***	1.259***	1.483***
		(0.170)	(0.212)	(0.249)
Natural resource exploitation by rebels			1.031***	0.838***
			(0.294)	(0.307)
Political-wing			−1.397***	−1.239***
			(0.347)	(0.374)
Territorial control by rebels			0.763***	0.622**
			(0.274)	(0.281)
Sexual violence by rebels			2.469***	2.468***
			(0.411)	(0.433)
Democracy				−0.019
				(0.043)
GDP per capita (log-transformed)				−0.279
				(0.339)
Youth population (log-transformed)				−1.667
				(1.210)
Youth unemployment rate				0.031*
				(0.016)
Constant	−1.896***	−7.458***	−8.272***	0.192
Year Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	691	662	656	639
Log Likelihood	−382.018	−293.977	−239.394	−231.359
Akaike Inf. Crit.	816.036	651.955	550.788	542.719

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Regional Controls

To account for potential reporting biases which may cause regional discrepancies in my measure of forced recruitment by rebels, I estimate our main models, presented in Table 5 of the manuscript, with region-controls. The reference category is Europe. My main findings are robust to controlling for the region in which rebels operate.

Table A.11. Social Origins, Legitimacy-Seeking and Forced Recruitment

	DV: Forced Recruitment by Rebels			
	Model 37	Model 38	Model 39	Model 40
International legitimacy-seeking	0.918***	1.044***	1.107***	0.802*
	(0.282)	(0.332)	(0.374)	(0.479)
Pre-war organizational ties of civilians	0.013	0.029	0.090	−0.089
	(0.230)	(0.291)	(0.376)	(0.399)
Legitimacy-seeking*Pre-war ties	−1.402***	−1.552***	−1.533**	−1.834**
	(0.510)	(0.592)	(0.674)	(0.757)
Ideological appeals		0.204	0.414***	0.465***
		(0.125)	(0.152)	(0.175)
Marxist		0.802**	1.081**	1.590***
		(0.366)	(0.435)	(0.527)
Religious		−0.644**	−0.690*	−0.357
		(0.294)	(0.356)	(0.405)
Ethnic		−0.841***	−1.438***	−1.522***
		(0.263)	(0.348)	(0.356)
Battle-related deaths		0.557***	0.376***	0.426**
		(0.111)	(0.129)	(0.166)
Relative rebel strength		1.106***	1.176***	1.512***
		(0.173)	(0.203)	(0.243)
Natural resource exploitation by rebels			1.119***	0.886***
			(0.280)	(0.309)
Political-wing			−0.913***	−0.785**
			(0.331)	(0.360)
Territorial control by rebels			0.657**	0.862***
			(0.257)	(0.308)
Sexual violence by rebels			2.344***	2.381***
			(0.396)	(0.412)
Democracy				−0.034
				(0.043)
GDP per capita (log-transformed)				−0.371
				(0.427)
Youth population (log-transformed)				−4.291***
				(1.442)
Youth unemployment rate				−0.011
				(0.022)
Regional Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	691	662	656	639
Log Likelihood	−377.093	−308.044	−258.924	−248.075
Akaike Inf. Crit.	770.185	644.088	553.848	540.149

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Sexual Violence by Rebels

To eliminate the possibility that my findings simply reflect groups' underlying proclivity towards committing human rights violations, I conduct an additional analysis of sexual violence by groups. The data on sexual violence are adopted from Faulkner and Doctor (2021) and Walsh, Conrad and Whitaker (2023). I find that legitimacy-seeking and pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations are significant negative predictors of forced recruitment. However, I do not find significant interaction effects between the two predictors, suggesting that my findings regarding forced recruitment are unique to forced recruitment and do not merely reflect proclivity towards committing human rights violations. The way that groups' social origin moderates the relationship between international legitimacy-seeking and forced recruitment relates to how groups devise their recruitment strategies in light of goals regarding reputation and constraints stemming from recruitment pools.

Table A.12. Social Origins, Legitimacy-Seeking and Sexual Violence

	DV: Sexual Violence by Rebels			
	Model 41	Model 42	Model 43	Model 44
International legitimacy-seeking	−1.212***	−1.263***	−1.608***	−2.632***
	(0.334)	(0.362)	(0.393)	(0.523)
Pre-war organizational ties of civilians	−0.673***	−0.581**	−0.868**	−0.872**
	(0.201)	(0.254)	(0.362)	(0.374)
Legitimacy-seeking*Pre-war ties	−1.768*	−1.368	−0.583	0.828
	(1.074)	(1.089)	(1.136)	(1.184)
Ideological appeals		−0.149	0.033	−0.202
		(0.106)	(0.144)	(0.161)
Marxist		0.090	−0.119	0.028
		(0.281)	(0.324)	(0.407)
Religious		−0.530**	−0.864***	−0.421
		(0.251)	(0.307)	(0.389)
Ethnic		−0.936***	−1.234***	−1.299***
		(0.242)	(0.320)	(0.359)
Battle-related deaths		0.078	−0.192*	−0.476***
		(0.086)	(0.100)	(0.135)
Relative rebel strength		0.492***	0.545***	0.939***
		(0.143)	(0.195)	(0.250)
Natural resource exploitation by rebels			2.146***	2.170***
			(0.314)	(0.355)
Political-wing			−0.698**	−0.664*
			(0.336)	(0.371)
Territorial control by rebels			1.119***	1.126***
			(0.268)	(0.298)
Democracy				0.078*
				(0.045)
GDP per capita (log-transformed)				−1.347***
				(0.350)
Youth population (log-transformed)				−2.655**
				(1.258)
Youth unemployment rate				0.081***
				(0.016)
Constant	−0.538***	−1.006	−1.398*	18.145***
	(0.116)	(0.681)	(0.790)	(6.748)
Observations	677	657	656	639
Log Likelihood	−362.451	−321.520	−271.172	−249.724
Akaike Inf. Crit.	732.903	663.040	568.343	533.448

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Pre-War Civilian-Led Organizations

The parent organizations of rebel groups with pre-war ties to civilian-led organizations according to FORGE dataset[171] are presented below.

Table A.13. Parent Organizations of Rebel Groups with Pre-War Ties to Civilian-Led Organizations

Government	Rebel Group	Pre-War Organization(s)
Afghanistan	Islamic Society of Afghanistan	Muslim Youth
Algeria	Armed Islamic Movement	Rabitat Dawa
Algeria	Armed Islamic Group	FIS
Angola	Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda-Renewed	Movement for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda Action Committee of the Cabinda National Union Mayombe National Alliance
Burundi	National Council for the Defense of Democracy	FRODEBU
Colombia	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	Colombian Communist Party
Colombia	National Liberation Army	Brigada Por Liberacion Nacional
Colombia	People¸Äôs Liberation Army	Colombian Communist Party
Djibouti	Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy	Action for the Revision of Order in Djibouti Front for the Restoration of Right and Equality Djibouti Patriotic Resistance Front
El Salvador	Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation	PCS-Communist Party of El Salvador FPL ERP FARN-Armed Forces of National Resistance PRTC (Workers' Revolutionary Party)
Ethiopia	Oromo Liberation Front	Mecha and Tulama Self-Help Association
Georgia	Republic of Abkhazia	Abkhaz Supreme (Soviet) Council
India	United Liberation Front of Assam	Asom Jatiyabadi Parishad (AJYCP)
Indonesia	Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor	Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT)
Iran	Republic of Kurdistan	Komalay JK
Iran	People's Mujahideen	Liberation Movement
Iraq	Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq	Party: al-Da'wa Movement: Islamic Action Organization
Iraq	Islamic Army of Iraq	"resistance groups" formed by Sunni clerics Ba'athist party
Iraq	Kurdish Democratic Party	Hiwa Shoresh Rizgari Iraqi branch of KDPI
Iraq	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	KDP Komala (student movement in Iraq) Socialist Movement of Kurdistan
Iraq	al-Mahdi Army	Sadrist Movement/Trend
Israel	Palestinian Islamic Jihad	Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood
Israel	Islamic Resistance Movement	Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood
Mali	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Azawad	Mouvement Touareg de Liberation
Nepal	Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist	CPM-Unity Centre
Pakistan	Baloch Unity	Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP) Balochistan National Party (BNP) National Party (NP) Baloch Haq Tawaar (BHT)
Pakistan	Balochistan Republican Army	Baluchi Ittihad JW
Peru	Shining Path	ELN PCP-Bandera Roja
Philippines	Communist Party of the Philippines	Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) Huks
Rwanda	Rwandan Patriotic Front	Rwanda Alliance for National Unity (RANU) National Resistance Army (NRA) of Uganda
Senegal	Movement of the Democratic Forces of the Casamance	MFDC
Somalia	Somali National Movement	Somali Islamic Democratic Movement UK Somali Welfare Association
Sri Lanka	People's Liberation Front	Communist Party (pro-China)
Sudan	Justice and Equality Movement	Popular Congress Party (PCP)
Tajikistan	United Tajik Opposition	Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan Democratic Party of Tajikistan Movement: Rastokhez
Turkey	Kurdistan Worker's Party	Ankara (Democratic) Higher Education Association
Yemen	Democratic Republic of Yemen	Yemeni Socialist Party

[171] (Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020)

Accounting for Inter-Group Competition

When multiple groups operate in the same country, rebels need to compete with rival groups over recruits. This inter-group competition can alter rebel group' recruitment strategies. The models below control for such inter-group competition by including a count measure of the number of rival groups operating in the same country in a given year. The findings are comparable after controlling for competition.

Table A.14. Social Origins, Legitimacy-Seeking and Forced Recruitment

	DV: Forced Recruitment by Rebels			
	Model 41	Model 42	Model 43	Model 44
International legitimacy-seeking	0.654**	0.310	0.561	0.299
	(0.275)	(0.332)	(0.383)	(0.461)
Pre-war organizational ties of civilians	0.217	−0.257	−0.175	−0.061
	(0.196)	(0.300)	(0.384)	(0.396)
Legitimacy-seeking*Pre-war ties	−1.994***	−1.813***	−1.702**	−1.610**
	(0.494)	(0.581)	(0.686)	(0.730)
Ideological appeals		0.130	0.263*	0.175
		(0.121)	(0.146)	(0.159)
Marxist		1.757***	2.007***	1.843***
		(0.319)	(0.380)	(0.448)
Religious		−0.600**	−0.572	−0.498
		(0.281)	(0.357)	(0.393)
Ethnic		−0.704**	−1.070***	−1.021***
		(0.277)	(0.355)	(0.379)
Battle-related deaths		0.876***	0.759***	0.779***
		(0.125)	(0.152)	(0.171)
Relative rebel strength		0.453***	0.588***	0.717***
		(0.172)	(0.210)	(0.242)
Natural resource exploitation by rebels			0.779***	0.556*
			(0.290)	(0.305)
Political-wing			−0.901***	−0.839**
			(0.337)	(0.367)
Territorial control by rebels			0.332	0.237
			(0.269)	(0.279)
Sexual violence by rebels			2.529***	2.571***
			(0.404)	(0.414)
Democracy				0.051
				(0.043)
GDP per capita (log-transformed)				−0.251
				(0.317)
Youth population (log-transformed)				−0.667
				(1.208)
Youth unemployment rate				0.014
				(0.015)
Competitors	−0.471***	−0.933***	−0.815***	−0.843***
	(0.082)	(0.123)	(0.140)	(0.151)
Constant	−0.534***	−6.841***	−7.587***	−3.889
	(0.145)	(0.934)	(1.080)	(6.481)
Observations	691	662	656	639
Log Likelihood	−382.898	−287.956	−242.472	−237.980
Akaike Inf. Crit.	775.796	597.913	514.944	513.959

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

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