The Causes, Dynamics, and Implications of Child Soldiering

Christopher Faulkner

University of Central Florida
THE CAUSES, DYNAMICS AND IMPLICATIONS OF CHILD SOLDIERING

by

CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL FAULKNER
M.A. University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2013
MPA University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2010
B.A. University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2008

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Major Professor(s): Güneş Murat Tezcür and Jonathan M. Powell
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ABSTRACT

Child soldiers continue to be regular participants in modern conflicts in many different parts of the world. This dissertation addresses several interrelated questions about child soldiering employing large-N statistical analyses, process-tracing, and in-depth interviews. First, it asks how foreign state support and the characteristics of these donors influence rebels’ recruitment of child soldiers. An important finding is that rebels supported by democratic states are less likely to employ child soldiers. It then investigates the factors and conditions that lead some groups to diversify their demographics in the types of recruits and others to not. Specifically, it considers why a rebel group would recruit children, but refrain from recruiting women. It examines theoretical arguments that contend group ideology, desires for patriarchal preservation, societal gender inequalities, and the location/type of rebellion (rural vs. urban) can each significantly contribute to groups’ recruitment behavior. Third, it considers a question that speaks directly to the first two questions. What factors lead to the initial recruitment of children and how conflict conditions may impact the dynamics of rebel recruitment over time? An in-depth analysis of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and the employment of a unique dataset on deceased Kurdish militants allows for an exploration of the temporal variation in the group’s recruitment patterns over four decades. It illustrates that inter-rebel rivalries, conflict intensity, and the evolution of human rights norms shape rebels’ recruitment behavior. The final section reorients the focus of the dissertation from rebel child soldiering to government child soldiering. It surveys the conditions under which the United States holds foreign governments accountable for their child soldiering practices through the restriction of certain forms of security assistance. In depth analyses of four norm-violating states and interviews with policy experts show that the strategic importance of a state and the systemic nature of child recruitment are
strong predictors of when security assistance waivers will be granted. Together, this dissertation advances scholarly understanding of the causes, dynamics, and implications of child soldiering.
This dissertation is dedicated to two groups of people. First, to my family, Mary, William, and Matthew, thank you for always believing in me. Secondly, to children across the world that have been, are currently, and will be affected by conflict, your voices are heard and your stories deserve attention. Know that you are not forgotten.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................... xii
LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................... xiii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .................................................................................... 1
CHAPTER TWO: FOLLOWING THE MONEY? CONSIDERING THE EFFECT OF
EXTERNAL STATE SPONSORSHIP ON REBEL CHILD SOLDIERING............................ 7
  Abstract ....................................................................................................................... 7
  Introduction ................................................................................................................ 8
  Literature Review ...................................................................................................... 10
  Lessons from the Study of Civilian Victimization ..................................................... 13
  Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................ 14
  Research Design ....................................................................................................... 19
    Dependent Variables ............................................................................................ 20
    Independent Variables ......................................................................................... 21
    Controls ................................................................................................................. 24
  Methodology ............................................................................................................ 27
  Results ...................................................................................................................... 30
  Case Studies ........................................................................................................... 38
  The PKK .................................................................................................................. 39
  The PYD .................................................................................................................. 42
  Discussion and Implications .................................................................................... 45
  References ............................................................................................................... 48
CHAPTER THREE: PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION
OF WOMEN AND CHILD SOLDIERS .......................................................................... 53
  Abstract .................................................................................................................... 53
  Introduction ............................................................................................................. 54
  Determinants of Child Soldiers ............................................................................ 57
  Women’s Participation in Armed Groups ............................................................... 59
  Patterns of Rebellion ............................................................................................. 65
  Patterns Across Groups Employing Children Exclusively .................................... 77
    The Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (MDJT) ................................ 85
    The Kosovo Liberation Army .............................................................................. 89
  Conclusions ............................................................................................................. 92
  References ............................................................................................................. 95
CHAPTER FOUR: INNOCENCE TO VIOLENCE: INVESTIGATING THE CASE OF CHILD
SOLDIERS IN THE PIKK ............................................................................................. 103
  Abstract .................................................................................................................... 103
  Introduction ............................................................................................................. 104
  Review of the Literature ....................................................................................... 106
  Theoretical Considerations ................................................................................... 110
  Research Design .................................................................................................... 120
  Kurdish Insurgent Militants Dataset ..................................................................... 121
  The Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) .................................................................... 122
  Tracing Patterns of Recruitment ............................................................................ 123
    The Onset of Insurgency (1984-1989) ................................................................. 129
    The Height of Conflict (1990-1999) ................................................................ 133
    After Öcalan (2000-2016) .................................................................................. 138
  Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 143
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Distribution of Child Soldier Use by Rebel Groups Across Regions ...................... 28
Figure 2. Distribution of Child Soldier Use by Rebel Groups Across Regions ..................... 71
Figure 3. Expectations ........................................................................................................ 78
Figure 4. PKK Recruits by Age 1975-1978 ........................................................................ 125
Figure 5. Ratio of Child Soldiers Across Recruitment Periods ........................................... 132
Figure 6. Boy and Girl Recruits in the PKK ....................................................................... 134
Figure 7. Comparing Child and Adult PKK Militants 1984-2016 ...................................... 137
Figure 8. PKK Militants and Child Soldiers 2000-2016 ..................................................... 140
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Distribution of Child Soldier Usage Rate (Index) by Conflict Dyads ................. 28
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics .......................................................................................... 29
Table 3. External State Sponsorship and Rebel Child Soldiering ................................. 30
Table 4. Human Rights Organizations (HROs) and Rebel Child Soldiering ............. 34
Table 5. Comparing Children and Women in NSAGs 1990-2008 ............................. 69
Table 6. Rebel Composition by Ideology ....................................................................... 76
Table 7. Groups Employing Children Exclusively (Henshaw data) ......................... 83
Table 8. Conscription by the PKK ................................................................................. 133
Table 9. Percentage of PKK Recruits with Unknown Age by Recruitment Period ...... 142
Table 10. Violators of the CSPA and Subsequent Waivers and Aid Restrictions 2010-2017.... 162
Table 11. Overview of Theoretical Expectations ......................................................... 172
Table 12. Summary of Hypotheses and Inductive Insights ........................................ 197
Table 13. Variance Inflation Factors ............................................................................ 214
Table 14. Bivariate Models ......................................................................................... 214
Table 15. Reduced Form Models .................................................................................. 215
Table 16. Statistics on PKK recruits Pre-1984-2016 .................................................... 218
Table 17. List of Interviews ........................................................................................... 220
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Nearly 30 years have passed since the near unanimous adoption of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Amongst other protections, this major human rights treaty prohibited the participation of children younger than the age of 15 in armed conflict. Yet three decades removed, child soldiering remains a persistent issue in conflicts across the globe with two recent independent assessments suggesting upwards of 75 percent of all insurgencies in the post-Cold War era having included children in their campaigns (Lasley and Thyne 2015; Haer and Böhmelt 2016). Given the frequency at which children remain a central part of conflict, this dissertation aims to examine four interrelated questions surrounding the issue of child soldiering. How does foreign state support impact rebel organizations’ recruitment of child soldiers?; b) What factors/conditions impact rebels’ recruitment of child soldiers over women combatants?; c) When do rebel organizations first recruit children and what factors contribute to variation in child recruitment over time?; d) When and under what conditions do states face penalties for their recruitment and use of children in their national armies? Below I briefly outline each respective chapter.

Chapter two examines the effect of foreign state sponsorship on rebel groups’ employment of child soldiers. Academic scholarship has largely pointed to the importance of foreign state sponsorship as a resource which loosens rebels’ constraints on violence (i.e. Salehyan et al. 2014). Yet, the majority of studies to date have relied on indicators which only account for the degree of lethal violence perpetrated by rebels. Extending arguments by those suggesting lethal violence is a poor proxy for overall patterns of rebel violence (Gutierrez-Sanin
and Wood 2017), I suggest that foreign state sponsorship increases the likelihood that rebels will employ child soldiers. This is an innovative approach as extant scholarship suggests the repertoire of rebel violence is often diverse and in need of further exploration. I condition this argument by contending that the state sponsors matter. In other words, support from democratic regimes is likely to function differently than support from their authoritarian counterparts. Rooted in the principal-agent framework, I argue that rebels which rely on support from predominantly democratic donor states are less likely to employ child soldiers as democratic states are less tolerant of human rights abuses. Adopting a mixed methods approach, I test this argument across a global sample of rebel organizations active between 1989-2009 and probe two cases of Kurdish insurgent groups active in Turkey and Syria. Results from the statistical analyses offer support for the mechanism. Case explorations qualify the findings by illustrating that rebels might also be attentive to where support is coming from and will respond accordingly in terms of their inclusion of child soldiers.

Chapter three explores the dynamics of rebel group composition. Specifically, I investigate why some rebellions are inclusive of both women and children while others are more likely to use child soldiers, but exclude women? Empirical assessments have investigated the inclusion of children and women across rebellions independently with scholars having yet to explore the intersection of these two groups. With estimates suggesting women are present in over half of all rebellions (Henshaw 2016) and over three-quarters witness the inclusion of child soldiers (Haer and Böhmelt 2016), this is a curious gap as descriptive analyses reveal over twenty percent of rebellions include child soldiers in the absence of women. This study suggests an interplay between societal gender norms, group ideology, the characteristics of children, and the setting of insurgency (rural/urban) as important factors associated with group composition.
Descriptive insights from a random selection of 72 non-state armed groups reveal interesting patterns. Ethnonationalist groups are more likely to see women present in rebellion, but are also more likely to see child soldiers present. The ability of such groups to mobilize popular support can assist in explaining the presence of a more diverse set of actors. Secondly, I note that maintenance of familial ties might help explain the significant overlap in the presence of both women and children across rebellions, but temper this conclusion as certain organizations reject recruits that have familial bonds that are seen as a sign of weakness and threat to their commitment. On the other hand, I argue that groups operating in societies with high levels of gender inequality in pre-conflict settings and those concerned with patriarchal backlash most likely to exclude women while still including child soldiers. This is especially likely in rural insurgencies as the barriers to gender equality and patriarchal norms are stronger while children often occupy and are involved in adult economic activities that suggest their status in rural communities may function differently than their urban counterparts. Children can be thought of as a low-cost option that can diminish concerns over patriarchal backlash while serving a functional purpose (i.e. augmenting group size). This can ensure the preservation of the patriarchy as male members are likely to be less concerned with the inclusion of children than with the incorporation of women who might demand empowerment and emancipation in post-conflict settings, thus eroding the patriarchal environment that may be more beneficial for them. This chapter also establishes the foundation for a portion of the theoretical argument of chapter four, specifically related to government indiscriminate violence and its effect on child recruitment.

Chapter four investigates child soldier usage in the PKK since the formation of the group in 1978 and traces patterns of recruitment through 2016. This paper has the unique advantage of
identifying demographic information on PKK militants including the age of recruits across different time periods. The ability to examine the initial recruitment patterns of a rebel organization and temporal variation in recruitment behavior provides critical insight on rebel child soldiering that is absent in existing literature. I argue that the environment in which nascent groups emerge is pivotal for understanding their recruitment decisions. Coupled with ideological roots and international norms at the time of formation, I find that the competition amongst rival Kurdish organizations can help explain why the PKK recruited children prior to its official launch. Next, I suggest that conflict conditions and specifically the aggressiveness and level of violence exhibited by a government’s counterinsurgency efforts, can lead rebels to decrease remaining barriers to entry. This results in a less selective recruitment process which increases the number of child soldiers active in the group. The investigation speaks directly to chapter three as I also show that under such conditions, rebels are also likely to include women at higher rates. Lastly, I assert that the entrenchment of international norms against rebel child soldiering can impact certain types of rebellions—notably those with separatist aspirations. These groups are most likely to desire international legitimacy and I contend that when prospects for peace increase and opportunities for goal attainment are more realistic, these groups have incentives to adjust their child recruitment.

While chapters two through four explore the factors and conditions leading to the inclusion of child soldiers in non-state armed groups, chapter five explores the consequences of states’ usage of child soldiers in their national armies or support of armed groups that use children. Although numerous states have agreed, in principle, that children should be excluded from conflict, many still include those under the age of 18 in their national militaries. Directly addressing this paradox, the United States passed the Child Soldier Prevention Act (CSPA) in
2008, a law which aimed to punish states that continued to employ child soldiers. Specifically, the CSPA prohibits the US from providing several forms of military/security assistance to states found in violation of its parameters. I contend that a state’s strategic value and the nature of child soldiering can assist in explaining when they will be held accountable and will they will be granted both full and partial waivers. Employing a qualitative research strategy including process-tracing and semi-structured interviews with policy experts, I show a state’s strategic value to be paramount in identifying when full waivers to the CSPA are most likely to be granted. However, the nature of child soldiering (i.e. the roles of children in the military and the systemic nature of the practice) suggests that states will, at a minimum, face restrictions on the disbursements of ‘lethal’ security assistance. Lastly, the case examinations reveal that those states which support non-state armed groups that use child soldiers, but do not have children within their national armies, are likely to face full implementation of the CSPA. I argue that this finding can be explained, in part, by the lack of institutionalization of child soldiering. In other words, because a recipient regime is not incorporating child soldiers directly into the national military, full implementation can swiftly correct a state’s behavior. Cutting security assistance can illustrate to recipient states that the US will not tolerate the continued violation of the CSPA and recipient states’ compliance can easily be achieved by refraining from supporting non-state groups that use children.

Together, the four components of this dissertation help uncover the causes, dynamics, and implications of child soldiering. The results in chapter two suggest that rebels that receive support from a higher percentage of democratic donors are less likely to be associated with child soldier recruitment and illustrates that rebel groups do indeed pay attention to where support comes from. Chapter three explores descriptive patterns of recruitment and identifies that the
overwhelming majority of groups include both women and children in their rebellions. It proposes a diverse set of theoretical explanations for the exclusion of women across those groups that include child soldiers, but ultimately illustrates the complexities surrounding group configuration. Chapter four clarifies some ambiguities left over from chapter three and shows that rivalry, ideology, conflict intensity, and international norms can all explain rebel recruitment of child soldiers at different points throughout an insurgency’s campaign. Lastly, chapter five speaks directly to chapter two, asking how democratic states, specifically the US, might punish violators of the norm against child soldiering, if at all. Focusing on bilateral interactions amongst states, it shows that the US is willing to conditionally implement the CSPA. Strategic interests/investment appear paramount in security assistance decisions, but they only matter to a certain extent. Perpetual violators, even those that have benefited from high levels of security assistance funding, can face partial implementation of the CSPA. Those states that are less strategically important and those which fund rebel organizations that recruit child soldiers ultimately become the primary targets of full CSPA implementation.
CHAPTER TWO: FOLLOWING THE MONEY? CONSIDERING THE EFFECT OF EXTERNAL STATE SPONSORSHIP ON REBEL CHILD SOLDIERING

Abstract

Many rebel groups continue to incorporate child soldiers yet the factors impacting these recruitment decisions remain underexplored. Extant literature has suggested that external sponsorship can increase rebels’ employment of lethal violence against civilians. However, work on child soldiering has been less conclusive about the effect, if any, exogenous support might have on rebel recruitment of children. I explore this puzzle and investigate how the characteristics of external state supporters, namely their domestic political institutions and strength of human rights lobbies, impact rebels’ recruitment of children. Building on liberal perspectives that suggest that human rights play a role in foreign policy, I argue that rebels receiving support from democratic donor groups and donor groups with strong human rights lobbies are less likely to engage in child soldiering. Examining a sample of 248 unique rebel groups active in 323 conflict dyads between 1989 and 2010, I find that when only accounting for the presence or absence of support, rebels with foreign support are no more likely to use child soldiers. However, when considering the characteristics of supporters, a higher concentration of democratic states is associated with a decreased likelihood that rebels use child soldiers. The quantitative analysis is supplemented with two case narratives. A most similar systems design of the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK) in Turkey and the Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (PYD) in Syria illustrates the theoretical mechanism and offers insight on limitations.
**Introduction**

Child soldiers have been used across the globe by non-state actors including the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) in Colombia, the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, and the Al-Mahdi Army in Iraq. Still, rebel groups such as the Arab Islamic Front of Azawad (FIAA) in Mali, the Chadian National Front (FNT) in Chad, Sikh insurgents in India, and Ansar al-Islam in Iraq have refrained from using child soldiers. What accounts for this variation? To date, literature has detailed a number of factors shaping the dynamics of rebel recruitment and composition, and while much has been uncovered, significant limitations remain. This paper focuses specifically on the effects of external state support. Foreign sponsorship is an important, yet often overlooked factor in the literature on rebel child soldiering. Those that have investigated the effects of external support on rebel recruitment of children have found mixed results, suggesting it can increase rebel violence against children or finding no significant difference when compared to groups without such support (i.e. Beber and Blattman 2013; Jo 2015). This variance motivates the current study and leads to the central research questions: 1) how does foreign state sponsorship impact rebel child soldiering and 2) how do the characteristics of foreign state donors impact the probability that a group will use child soldiers? In doing so, this paper brings together two strands of literature. First, it contributes to the literature evaluating how exogenous factors influence civilian victimization (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006; Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood 2014; Weinstein 2006; Wood 2014). Secondly, following precedent of recent scholarship (i.e. Cohen 2013; Cohen and Nordâs 2014), it disaggregates the concept of civilian victimization, focusing exclusively on rebel child soldiering.
It is well documented that foreign support can increase the degree of civilian victimization perpetrated by non-state armed groups as it can eliminate rebels’ dependence on civilian support (Wood 2014; Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood 2014). Resources provided by external sponsors have ranged from direct assistance in the form of troops, as illustrated by Rwanda’s support of the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) in the late 1990s, to the provision of territorial sanctuary as seen in Sudan’s support of the LRA in Uganda. However, scholars have primarily relied on Uppsala Conflict Data Program’s (UCDP) measure of violence against civilians known as ‘one-sided violence’. One-sided violence accounts for the number of civilians (non-combatants) killed by a rebel group in a given year and findings have consistently noted that the presence of foreign support can lead to increases in the number of civilian fatalities at the hands of insurgents.

From here the paper progresses in several parts. First, I briefly review the state of the literature on child soldiering with specific attention given to the conditions that have influenced rebels’ inclusion of child soldiers. Second, I discuss the importance of disaggregating various forms of civilian victimization. I then borrow from theoretical arguments rooted in a principal-agent framework to explain how foreign support from autocratic actors is likely to be associated with rebel child soldiering. Fourth, I discuss the research design and operationalization of key variables. In the analysis section, I quantitatively assess the theoretical argument with a cross-national sample of 324 conflict-dyad periods from 1989-2010. The results show that foreign state sponsorship has an inconclusive effect on the likelihood of rebel child soldiering. However, when one considers the characteristics of foreign state donors, meaningful differences arise. Those organization’s with a higher percentage of foreign supporters that are democratic appear less likely to use child soldiers in their rebellions. Following the quantitative assessment I turn to
a qualitative investigation of the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan or the PKK) in Turkey and the Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (PYD), a Kurdish militant group operating in Syria. The PKK, which has predominantly received support from more autocratic regimes (the exception being Greece), has used child soldiers throughout the majority of its existence. The PYD on the other hand, has benefited significantly from democratic (US) support since 2014 yet continues to employ child soldiers. At face value, this case appears to run counter to the theoretical argument, but closer examination suggests the group has been responsive to criticism of its child soldiering practices. I conclude with a discussion on policy implications and directions for future research.

**Literature Review**

Recent years have seen an increase in scholarship on child soldiering with efforts largely aimed at identifying factors leading to their inclusion in rebel groups and/or the conditions that push children to join these organizations. These investigations have largely been framed in one of two theoretical lenses: supply-side (push factors) versus demand-side (pull factors). Supply-side theories focus on the structural conditions that make children more likely to be associated with rebel groups. Scholars have argued that states with high orphan rates, limited educational opportunities, high poverty levels, and large numbers of vulnerable populations in the form of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are more likely to see rebel groups recruit child soldiers (Brett et al. 1996; Wessels 2006; Machel 1996; Cohn and Goodwin-Gill 1994; Achvarina and Reich 2006). Under these conditions, scholars argue, children become a readily available resource for rebel groups and are more likely to choose to join a rebellion. While anecdotal evidence suggests merit in these structural conditions, they fail to account for much of
the variance in child soldiering across rebel groups and across conflicts. Put differently, such societal conditions are often ubiquitous in violent conflict settings, but child soldiering is less so (Haer 2019).

While supply-side arguments focus on the access to and willingness of children to become members of rebellions, demand-side arguments explore the motives of the recruiters. Those advancing demand-side explanations contend that rebel groups see some benefit in child soldiers, often interpreting the process of their incorporation as an exercise in cost-benefit analysis. These scholars argue that children can augment troop size (particularly for those for rebellions facing heavy casualties), increase an organizations fighting capacity, and have become more valuable to rebel groups given the proliferation of small arms and light weapons found in modern conflict (Woods 1993; Blattman and Annan 2008; Haer and Böhmelt 2016a; Singer 2006). Others suggest that children are desirable given their ease of indoctrination, increased loyalty and responsiveness to coercive tactics, decreased assessment of risk, and cost of retention (Beber and Blattman 2013; Gates and Reich 2010; Brett and Specht 2004; Schauer and Elbert 2010).

Building on demand-side explanations, scholars have sought to explain how groups’ goals can assist in explaining variance in rebel child soldiering. These studies contend that rebellions make intentional calculations about the signals their actions might send to the international community (Lasley and Thyne 2015; Jo 2015). Lasley and Thyne (2015), for instance, argue that the need for international legitimacy is likely to constrain rebel child soldiering for secessionist groups. In contrast, Jo (2015) contends that separatist groups are more likely to use children given their reliance on popular support, but are often likely to be switchover compliers (i.e. more likely to stop using child soldiers than other groups). Employing
different samples, each find support for their arguments, but more importantly show group goals to be a useful predictor for rebels’ recruitment of children.

Though current literature has advanced scholarly understanding of the conditions leading to child soldiering, little has been done to fully consider the effect of foreign support on rebel child soldiering. While previous economic arguments of rebel behavior have often focused on the role of gemstones, narcotics, and other natural resources, support from foreign governments “remain an equally (if not more) important source of financing for [many] rebel organizations” (Salehyan et al. 2014, 636). Foreign funding, while adding value to a rebel group, can also divert its goals with members becoming more invested in profiteering (Dishman 2001, Weinstein 2007). External sources of funding can also prompt groups to engage in practices that are more violent towards civilian populations. Eck (2014) showed that economic shocks can impact groups’ recruitment, as losing funding can stifle an organization’s ability to incentivize volunteers. Thus, when groups become desperate they appear more likely to engage in involuntary recruitment practices and accept less committed recruits to meet short term needs. Relatedly, Beber and Blattman (2013) suggest that foreign support can make rebels more violent in their recruitment efforts, increasing the rate at which they forcibly recruit children. Similarly, Faulkner (2016) shows that the LRA’s rate of forcible child recruitment dramatically increased following its receipt of support from Sudan. However, others have find foreign support has an inconclusive on the likelihood that rebels use children in the first place (Faulkner et al. 2019; Haer et al. 2019). In the analysis section, I systematically examine the relationship between foreign sponsorship and child soldiering by insurgent groups.
Lessons from the Study of Civilian Victimization

Civilian victimization is broadly defined as a wartime strategy that targets and kills (or attempts to kill) noncombatants (Downes 2006, 156-157). Academic studies exploring rebel violence against civilians have traditionally focused on ‘one-sided violence’ to capture the degree of civilian victimization throughout conflict (Wood 2010; Schneider et al. 2012; Fjelde and Hultman 2014; Saleyhan et al. 2014). While this measure has yielded meaningful insights into the level of violence perpetrated by rebel groups, focusing exclusively on lethal violence might fail to capture other important micro-level form of victimization including child soldiering.

Although many recognize child soldiering as a form of civilian victimization, quantitative literature has focused almost exclusively on lethal violence as an umbrella for all forms of victimization (Wood 2010; Salehyan et al. 2014; Wood 2014; Wood and Kathman 2015). Data constraints are often referenced as a major reason for this, but such an operationalization captures only one form of the various types of civilian abuse that often occur during wartime (rape, abduction, child soldiering, etc.). Recent scholarship shows that lethal violence is not a good proxy for the overall patterns of violence employed by rebel groups (Gutierrez-Sanin and Wood 2017). Thus, re-examining the validity of early studies which relied exclusively on lethal violence is important given rebels’ repertoire of violence (Hoover Green 2016). For example, evidence suggests that insurgents can and do engage in high levels of lethal violence against civilians while also incorporating child soldiers as seen with the LRA across Uganda, the Central African Republic, and the DRC. However, other insurgents, such as the PKK in Turkey, are less

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1 “One-sided violence is the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians which results in at least 25 deaths per year” (Eck et al. 2004, 136; Eck and Hultman 2007, 235).
lethal towards civilians, but still use child soldiers (i.e. Tezcür and Besaw 2016). To explore these patterns more fully, this study extends arguments calling for a more nuanced conceptualization of civilian victimization by focusing exclusively on rebel child soldiering. Ultimately, this strategy can improve our understanding of factors that influence rebels’ patterns of violence in conflict.

Scholars have made valuable contributions in assessing the characteristics and conditions that lead rebels to perpetrate violence against civilians. A robust finding is the positive relationship between external support and civilian victimization (Weinstein 2005; Wood 2014; Salehyan et al. 2014). Theoretically, groups with stable resource streams (i.e. access to natural resources, foreign support, etc.) are more likely to lose incentives to foster benevolent relationships with civilians. The access to such resources decreases their reliance on local support. Others contend that rebel tactics are conditional upon a rebel group’s needs at various points in a conflict as strategies are often reactive to the dynamics of conflict (Eck 2014). Groups suffering from heavy resource loses may be more likely to engage in practices that would otherwise be seen as morally reprehensible such as kidnapping, looting, or killing civilians (Eck 2014; Wood 2014). Though these scholars mention child soldiering in their arguments on civilian victimization, their focus remains on lethal violence. To address this gap, I consider how foreign sponsorship, largely recognized to increase levels of lethal violence, effects rebels’ recruitment of child soldiers.

**Theoretical Framework**

Rebellions receive varying degrees of support from foreign donors. For some rebel organizations, like the Taliban, foreign state sponsorship may be a significant contributor to the
organization’s longevity and survival. For others foreign sponsorship may be an inconsistent or ancillary item that bolsters its resource pool at times, but is unreliable for the long term. Certain rebel groups such as the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) in India, may lack foreign support entirely. For such groups, collaboration with civilians is likely be essential for their long-term survival. They have strong incentives to maintain amicable relations with civilians and avoid practices that may jeopardize these relationships (i.e. child soldiering).

A distinct feature of foreign state support is that it suggests a contract between the foreign donor and the recipient rebel group and can be thought of in terms of a principal-agent framework (Salehyan 2010; Salehyan et al. 2014, 657). Principal-agent theory suggests that a principal provides an agent with some form of assistance, often with the expectation of a payoff or degree of leverage over the recipient’s behavior. Foreign states engage in this type of relationship for a variety of reasons including (but not limited to) efforts to fight opposition groups in foreign states, as seen with US support of the Syrian Democratic Forces, to attempt to indirectly challenge neighboring governments, unseat ruling parties, or assist groups with secessionist ambitions, as illustrated by Museveni’s support of the SPLM/A in Sudan and South Africa’s involvement in Angola, or for other forms of policy advancement. In supporting rebel groups as proxies, donor states can avoid the costs associated with direct involvement. However, there are tradeoffs—not the least of which relate to agency loss. Agency loss, or “agency slack,” occurs when an agent’s actions are inconsistent with the preferences of the principal (Salehyan 2010, 495).

For donor states, this can be particularly worrisome as their rebel recipients might engage in undesirable behavior, unaligned with expectations. At the same time, foreign support can lead to the elimination of incentives and/or the need for recipient groups to collect resources from
local populations as they rely on support from their donors (Weinstein 2007; Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood 2014). Even with the potential that recipients deviate from agents’ desires, evidence suggests that many states are willing to accept this risk and support rebel organizations.

In similar fashion to those suggesting the power of natural resources to drive rebels to commit acts of terror against civilians, I argue that external state sponsorship will have a comparable effect on child soldier recruitment. Here, insurgencies with access to foreign support are not solely reliant on local populations for support and this can remove constraints on violence against uncooperative civilians. However, the repertoire of violence employed can vary significantly and I suggest that foreign financing, either in the absence of or at low levels of civilian victimization, can increase the likelihood of rebel child soldiering (i.e. Weinstein 2006; Haer and Böhmelt 2016a; Faulkner 2016). Even if this foreign support ebbs and flows, it can assist rebels in overcoming resource problems that plague poor rebellions.

A counterargument is that increased resources can actually help rebels overcome recruitment problems as they can pay recruits or offer them other tangible benefits. While this may be a reality for certain groups, individuals join rebellions for many reasons which are often unrelated to pecuniary benefits (Elster 1985; Cederman et al. 2010; Viterna 2013; Tezcür 2016). However, even if rebels see a surge in the number of recruits willing to join for economic gain, incentives still exist to limit ‘payouts’ to members. Particularly if support is monetary, leaders may want to retain more for themselves or may be more interested in reinvesting in supplies and equipment. In short, there may be benefits in keeping the number of shareholders low. Children become an attractive resource in these cases as they are often cheaper and can be kept from sharing in any tangible benefits more easily than their adult counterparts who may often demand more (Haer et al. 2019). As a result, I anticipate that rebel groups that have foreign state funding
will be more likely to employ child soldiers in comparison to those groups that lack any type of foreign state support:

_Hypothesis 1: Rebel groups that receive external state support will be more likely to use child soldiers than those groups without external sponsorship._

Differing effects of foreign state sponsorship on rebel child soldiering in earlier work might also be attributed to the lack of exploration of where support comes from. For instance, Beber and Blattman (2013) showed that having a foreign donor can increase the likelihood of forced child soldiering, but only consider its presence or absence. Similarly, others have shown that foreign support has an inconclusive effect for general patterns of rebel child soldiering (i.e. Faulkner et al. 2019). Central to the principal-agent framework is the expectation that “governments [principals] contract with rebels [agents] to provide foreign policy services” (Saleyhan et al. 2014, 638). Governments may be selective with the types of rebel organizations they align with based on demands and policy desires (Saleyhan et al. 2011). This suggests that the characteristics of donor states can impact their willingness to provide support (or not) to certain rebel groups. While some states are willing to tolerate the risk of agency slack, others are may be less willing, particularly when the consequences can impact leaders’ domestic reputation. For instance, certain states may be less tolerant of human rights abuses even when pursuing policy goals/objectives and may be less inclined to fund an insurgent group if the behavior of the organization fails to align with the donor’s standards. Democratic states in particular face the constraint of balancing domestic perceptions of foreign policy behavior whereas their autocratic counterparts are less susceptible to meaningful public backlash based on their support for violent
rebels. Therefore, I consider the level of democracy of donor states and anticipate that when donors are democratic, rebel groups will be less likely to use child soldiers than when donor states are autocratic.

*Hypothesis 2a: Rebel groups that receive external support from democracies are less likely to use child soldiers than groups receiving support from autocracies.*

An important consideration is the potential of an endogenous relationship between rebel child soldiering and state sponsorship. While states may choose to refrain from supporting groups who use child soldiers, rebels’ practices towards civilians may dictate the types of donors who support them. The causal direction is difficult to capture in the statistical analysis given the time limitations in the coding of the main dependent variable(s). A process-tracing study of the PKK and PYD cases pays special attention to temporal dynamics and assists in exploring the direction of these relationships. These case narratives afford the opportunity to identify when child soldiering practices began in relation to foreign support and how rebel groups might respond when their child soldiering practices are exposed.

While I expect a negative association between democratic donors and rebel child soldiering, historical evidence shows that democracies are willing, at times, to tolerate some level of human rights abuses (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2005). Using newly compiled data by Haer and Böhmelt (2016a), which provides an ordinal measure of the level of child soldiering by rebels, I also consider the effect of donor characteristics on the degree to which rebels engage in child soldiering. India’s support of the Karen National Union (KNU) and Kashmir insurgents are cases where a democratic donor chose to provide support even when child soldiers were
being used by rebel recipients, albeit at lower levels. Thus, though the general expectation is a negative association between democratic donors and rebel child soldiering, these cases demonstrate that democracies, at times, will provide support to rebels that recruit child soldiers. Consequently, I expect in such cases that the level of rebel child soldiering will be lower.

Although democracies have given support to rebels with dismal human rights records, they are typically far more constrained in who they support both due to domestic accountability human rights lobbies that are more visible and active when compared to their autocratic counterparts. As a result, we should expect that autocratic regimes to be less constrained in their support of severe human rights abusers. This leads to the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2b: Rebel groups that receive external support from more democratic donor states are less likely to use children at a high rate (>50%) than groups with support from non-democracies.*

**Research Design**

The theory presented suggests that rebels are more likely to use child soldiers when external state sponsorship exists as they are less dependent upon local populations. However, this expectation is qualified by suggesting that the characteristics of donor groups—specifically their democratic

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2 Scholars have also argued that the democratic effect of donors may largely be attributed to the strength of their human rights lobbies and that any democratic effect is actually driven by the influence of human rights activism within the donor states (Salehyan et al. 2014). If accurate, then the strength of human rights lobbies within donor states “should ‘soak up’ much of the variance in democracy,” while still exerting a “strong effect on its own” (654). While democracies may, at times, turn a blind eye to rebel groups’ questionable human rights records, the strength of a state’s human rights lobbies may constrain both their ability and/or decisions to support groups who use child soldiers. As such, I consider different indicators to consider such an effect.
institutions and strength of human rights lobbies—can impact rebel child soldiering. I test these expectations using data from Haer and Böhmelt (2016a) who provide information on non-state actors’ use of child soldiers. The data cover a sample of 323 conflict dyads active between 1989-2010 and is an expansion of the original Non-State Actor (NSA) Dataset (Cunningham et al. 2009). The unit of analysis is the conflict-dyad period and focuses specifically on the rebel organization within each dyad. This differs from most studies on foreign support and rebel behavior towards civilians which traditionally adopt a conflict-year unit of analysis. Data limitations, notably a time invariant dependent variable, led me to focus on the conflict-dyad period. Specifically, although the actual rate of child recruitment likely varies, it is difficult, if not impossible to determine annual changes across a large sample of groups. As an example, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) fighting against Uganda from 1988-2001 and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), active throughout 2003 before dissolving at the end of the year, are each one observation in the data even though the former was active over a longer period of time. In total, my cross-sectional approach includes over 200 distinct rebel groups operating at some point in a civil conflict with the government between 1989 and 2010.

Dependent Variables

The main dependent variable, Child Soldier Use, is operationalized in two distinct ways. First, given the difficulties in obtaining accurate and reliable data on rebel child soldiering I rely on the traditional dichotomous measure collected by Haer and Böhmelt (2016a). While this inherently limits the inferences that can be drawn, it is the most universally employed measure to date in the
child soldier literature. A 1 indicates a rebel group used child soldiers at some point during the specified conflict-dyad period and 0 otherwise.³

Secondly, in addition to the binary indicator, I include a measure which captures the rate of child soldier usage across rebellions (Haer and Böhmelt 2016a). This measure has improved our understanding of the prevalence of child soldiering within rebels’ ranks, illustrating the gravity of this form of victimization. To test Hypothesis 2b, I employ the ordinal variable for the level of child soldiering within a rebel group. The variable is coded as follows: 0 when there is no evidence of child soldiers; 1 when less than 50% of the group is comprised of child soldiers; and 2 when a majority (greater than 50%) of the group is child soldiers. Although it would be ideal to identify when rebels first recruit child soldiers, these two measures provide useful insight and allow us to capture not only the inclusion/exclusion of child soldiers, but also the extent of their involvement.

*Independent Variables*

The central hypotheses in this paper suggest that external state support will increase the likelihood of rebel child soldiering, while simultaneously arguing that rebels with support from democratic donors and donors with strong human rights lobbies will be those that are less likely to use child soldiers. The main variable of interest, *External State Sponsorship*, comes from the UCDP External Support Project - Disaggregated/Supporter Dataset which provides annual information on external support for the primary belligerents during civil conflicts from 1989 to ________________

³ I use the 18 or under threshold as defined in Lasley and Thyne (2015) and Haer and Böhmelt (2016).
2009 (Högbladh et al. 2011). Previous efforts exploring foreign support and the effect on rebel child soldiering have predominantly relied on the Non-State Actor (NSA) dataset. However, the data only provides a binary measure for the presence of state support.  

Taking the NSA data as a useful starting point, the UCDP External Supporter dataset provides annual information on rebel groups’ external sponsorship, offering specific information on which years rebels received support and from what source. An additional advantage of the UCDP dataset is the availability of information on the type of support given to rebels during the course of a conflict.  

Lastly, while the UCDP dataset only provides information through 2009, it also includes information on non-state supporters of rebel groups. Although the theoretical dynamics of how support from other non-state actors might impact rebel behavior need to be studied, information on all sources of exogenous support can offer a more complete picture of rebel groups’ resources.  

Using the UCDP dataset, I code external state sponsorship in two distinct ways. First, I use a binary measure (H1) for whether an insurgency received support from any foreign state during the specified conflict period (1 if state support is present and 0 otherwise). Second, because data on external support are disaggregated by rebel group/year I am able to investigate

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4 Although it provides some information on who the foreign state sponsors of rebels are, the NSA dataset is not disaggregated by sponsor, there is no temporal variation, and the data are less complete than those of UCDP.  
5 For example, the UCDP External Sponsorship dataset provides information on ten types of support including whether the group received weapons, troops, access to military intelligence infrastructure/joint operations, territory, material/logistics support, funding/economic support, intelligence material, training/expertise, other forms of support (i.e. running/harboring/funding a radio station belonging to a rebel group, or support of an unknown type (for more detailed information see UCDP External Support Project – Disaggregated Supporter Dataset Codebook pp. 10, 14-17)  
6 In total, 301 of the 323 conflict dyads appear in both the NSA and UCDP External Sponsorship datasets. The 22 cases which are not in the UCDP dataset, but are in the NSA dataset provide information on whether a foreign state provided aid to a rebel group. However, information regarding external rebel support is not available.
the characteristics of the foreign state donors at any point throughout a group’s rebellion. To test the hypotheses about the impact of regime type of the donor, I include three additional measures of external sponsorship: the average polity score of the rebel group’s set of donor states; the percent of a group’s state donors that are categorized as democratic; and the number of human rights institutions operating in foreign state sponsors (Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood 2014; Ho 2015). I discuss the transformations of these variables below.

I define a donor group as the set of states that provide support to a specified rebel group at some point during its respective conflict-dyad period. Next, I generated a count of the number of unique donors for each rebel group. Distinguishing the number of unique donors is important as rebel groups may be receiving support in multiple years from the same donor(s) and this ensures that state/rebel donors are not double-counted. For donor groups’ level of democracy I opted for the polity2 score attributed to each donor state annually from 1989 to 2009 (Marshall and Jaggers 2004). I collapsed the data into average polity2 scores for each donor group in each conflict-dyad year. For instance, if a rebel group received funding from the United States in 2008 (polity2 score=10) and also received funding from Nigeria in 2008 (polity2 score=4), the average polity2 score for that rebel group conflict year would equal 7. Once averages for each conflict-year were identified, I collapsed the polity2 yearly average to the average polity2 score of all donors over a rebel’s conflict dyad-period. The measure captures the average polity score of the entire donor group, offering a snapshot of the character of donor/donor groups’ political

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7 Given that the dataset also provides information on non-state foreign supporters, I include a second measure indicating whether a donor received government support, rebel support, or both.
8 Given the time invariant dependent variables, I chose to truncate the data on donor characteristics to allow for merging with available data on child soldiering. This results in a loss of variance across explanatory variables, but I construct measures which attempt to provide an accurate and realistic representation of donor group characteristics throughout each rebel group’s conflict dyad period.
institutions over a rebel group’s years of activity. The resulting variable is a continuous measure ranging from -10 to 10. I also generated a binary indicator as to whether the donor state in a given year was democratic or not. Donors with a +6 or higher polity2 score were considered democratic. Following a similar procedure, I generated a unique count of the number of democratic donors and number of autocratic donors and transformed this variable to create a measure for the percent of donor countries that were democratic over each group’s conflict-dyad period.

To capture the strength of human rights lobbies within a donor group I draw on data from Murdie and Bhasin (2011) who provide three classifications for human rights lobbies in a state: 1) the number of Human Rights Organizations (HROs) with permanent offices within a state; 2) the number of human rights events within a state; and 3) the number of human rights specific International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) with membership or volunteers within a state. I opt for Murdie and Bhasin’s (2011) first indicator—a count of the number of HROs with permanent offices in a donor state. I generate a sum of HROs with offices across all donor groups for each rebel conflict-dyad period. Donor groups with more HROs with a permanent office are expected to be negatively associated with rebel child soldiering.

Controls

9 There may be a concern of multicollinearity between the donor group’s democracy average and the HRO measurement. I test for this accordingly.
To control for other influences on the use of child soldiers, I include a host of control variables standard in the literature on child soldiering. First, to distinguish between civilian victimization and child soldiering I include the measure—One-sided Violence—which calculates the sum of the total number of civilians killed by a rebel group in each conflict-dyad period. Data are drawn from the UCDP one-sided violence dataset.\textsuperscript{10}

Secessionist Conflict is a binary indicator for secessionist goals coded and is drawn from the NSA dataset (Cunningham et al. 2009). It receives a value of 1 if the group is considered a secession movement and 0 otherwise. As discussed above, previous scholarship offers two competing ideas. First secessionist groups are less likely to use child soldiers as these movements require international legitimacy in order to achieve their objectives (Lasley and Thyne 2015). Second, secessionist movements are more likely to benefit from popular support leading to an increase in the number of underage fighters (Jo 2015).

To capture a structural factors associated with child soldiering, I include Youth Unemployment and GDP per capita. Youth Unemployment is the percentage of the population ages 15-24 who are unemployed in a state. I calculate the average percentage within each state from 1989-2010. GDP per capita controls for the influence of poverty on child soldiering, and is constructed as average of the natural log of GDP per capita within a state from 1989-2010.

Democracy, drawn from the Polity IV project (Marshall and Jaggers 2004), is used to capture the characteristics of authority of a state in conflict. Grievances against a government may lead to the mobilization of a population, including children (Andvig and Gates 2010). In

\textsuperscript{10} Inclusion of this variable is necessary to demonstrate that it fails to capture all the variance in the main dependent variable (Child Soldier Use). One-sided violence and Child Soldier Use are only weakly correlated; .11 (binary) and .25 (ordinal).
autocratic regimes, repression might increase the likelihood that children join insurgency. Contrarily, more democratic governments may provide higher degrees of support to vulnerable populations limiting the pool of viable recruits (Lasley and Thyne 2015). Either way, I use the average polity2 score of the state from 1989-2010.

Access to vulnerable populations may also impact child soldiering. I include the variables Refugees, IDPs, and Population to account for access. Refugees is captured as the average number of refugees within a state from 1989-2010. IDPs accounts for the average number of IDPs per country from 1989-2010. Population considers the average size of the total population from 1989-2010 within a conflict state. For each of these measures I take the natural log.

Given suggestions that group structures and characteristics can influence their recruitment decisions, I include measures for group strength and command control. Rebel strength, an ordinal measure for strength (much weaker, weaker, parity), is included as strong rebel groups may refrain from child soldiering as it is not a necessary tactic whereas weaker groups may forage for anyone capable of carrying a weapon to increase their capabilities. Strength Central is an ordinal measure for the strength of central command of a rebel group (low, moderate, high) and captures variance in groups’ level of discipline. Internal discipline of a group has been shown to impact the level of civilian abuse perpetrated by an insurgency (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006). Groups lacking strong central command may be more likely to use child soldiers, which is a variant of civilian abuse. Both variables are drawn from the NSA dataset.

Lastly, I include controls for conflict characteristics such as Conflict Duration (natural log of the number of days a conflict-period lasted) and Conflict Intensity, a dichotomous measure for low-scale conflict (25 to 999 battle deaths) or high intensity conflict (>1000 battle deaths).
Both the length of conflict and the intensity of conflict control for the desperation argument, i.e. that groups will employ child soldiers when they are desperate to fill the rank and file.

**Methodology**

With both a dichotomous and ordinal dependent variable (*Child Soldier Use*), my statistical models employ logistic regression and ordered logistic regression. Figure 1 illustrates the geographic dispersion of child soldier usage rate by rebel groups between 1989 to 2010. Table 1 reports the frequency of usage by rebel groups across the same time period. Of the 323 conflict dyads, roughly 24 percent saw no child soldiers used. Over 60 percent of conflict dyads involved rebel groups use child soldiers at a low rate while approximately 15 percent used child soldiers at a high rate. In total, 246 conflict-dyads saw rebel groups use child soldiers in some capacity while 77 groups had no evidence of child soldier usage.
**Figure 1.** Distribution of Child Soldier Use by Rebel Groups Across Regions

**Table 1.** Distribution of Child Soldier Usage Rate (Index) by Conflict Dyads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usage Rate</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No child soldiers</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>23.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use child soldiers at low rate (&lt;50%)</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>60.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of child soldiers at high rate (&gt;50%)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>323</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics of all main explanatory variables, control variables, and the two forms of the dependent variable.
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Soldier Dummy</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>0.7616099</td>
<td>0.42676</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Child Soldier Index</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>0.9133127</td>
<td>0.6194888</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td><strong>Main Independent Variables</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Foreign State Donor</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>0.5083056</td>
<td>0.5007635</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel Donor</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>0.2392027</td>
<td>0.4273071</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donor Group Polity Average</td>
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<td>-2.403604</td>
<td>5.311043</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Donor Group-Percent Democratic</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>0.1789782</td>
<td>0.3342924</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanent HRO Offices</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>0.7992832</td>
<td>1.338835</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.451038</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Controls</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Sided Violence</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>424.0576</td>
<td>2041.084</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29593</td>
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<td>Secessionist Conflict</td>
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<td>0.2414861</td>
<td>0.4286483</td>
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<td>Youth Unemployment (ln)</td>
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<td>2.55881</td>
<td>0.7131409</td>
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<td>GDP Per Capita (ln)</td>
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<td>7.195277</td>
<td>1.186109</td>
<td>5.516325</td>
<td>10.45193</td>
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<td>Democracy (Polity2 Average)</td>
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<td>0.2462935</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Refugees (ln)</td>
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<td>9.594898</td>
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<td>IDPs (ln)</td>
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<td>13.94447</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population (ln)</td>
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<td>16.93744</td>
<td>1.551682</td>
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<td>20.77387</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebel Strength</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>1.647059</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strength Central</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>2.074468</td>
<td>0.6240613</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

Results are presented in Table 3 which includes several models accounting for the impact of external state support and sponsors’ characteristics on rebel child soldiering. Models 1-3 report results for the binary measure of child soldiering while models 4-6 consider their effects on the ordinal measure. Across the models, we see mixed results for the proposed hypotheses regarding the effect of external support and the influence of donor group characteristics on rebel behavior. First, the coefficient for External State Sponsorship in Models 1 and 4 is negative, but insignificant. Thus, it appears that simply having an external state backer does not increase the probability that rebels will employ child soldiers. Turning to the donor groups’ average polity score (Models 2 and 5), the coefficient is in the anticipated negative direction, suggesting that rebels receiving support from more democratic donor groups are less likely to use child soldiers, but fails to reach statistical significance. Thus, this operationalization of the independent variable presents no support for a ‘democratic’ constraining effect on rebel recruitment of children.11

Table 3. External State Sponsorship and Rebel Child Soldiering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1 (Binary)</th>
<th>Model 2 (Binary)</th>
<th>Model 3 (Binary)</th>
<th>Model 4 (Ordinal)</th>
<th>Model 5 (Ordinal)</th>
<th>Model 6 (Ordinal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External State Sponsorship (binary)</td>
<td>-0.159 (0.470)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.126 (0.342)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor Group Polity2 Average</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.112 (0.0720)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.0330 (0.0452)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Democratic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.387* (1.280)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.379* (0.763)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11 This can be attributed, in part, to the specification of the main explanatory variable (donor group polity2 average) in Models 2 and 5. Specifically, the mean polity2 average for donor groups in the sample is -2.4. As a result, the majority of donor groups in the sample align more closely with the autocratic side of the polity scale. Consequently, there is limited evidence of a constraining effect on rebel child soldiering in these model specifications.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Binary)</td>
<td>(Binary)</td>
<td>(Binary)</td>
<td>(Ordinal)</td>
<td>(Ordinal)</td>
<td>(Ordinal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-sided Violence</td>
<td>0.0102*</td>
<td>0.0196*</td>
<td>0.0172*</td>
<td>0.000878**</td>
<td>0.000672*</td>
<td>0.000696*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00580)</td>
<td>(0.0109)</td>
<td>(0.0103)</td>
<td>(0.000347)</td>
<td>(0.000357)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secessionist Conflict</td>
<td>1.024</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.581</td>
<td>1.073***</td>
<td>0.889</td>
<td>0.971*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.623)</td>
<td>(0.911)</td>
<td>(0.904)</td>
<td>(0.415)</td>
<td>(0.572)</td>
<td>(0.567)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Unemployment</td>
<td>-1.912***</td>
<td>-1.606*</td>
<td>-1.603*</td>
<td>-1.306***</td>
<td>-1.470***</td>
<td>-1.500***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ln)</td>
<td>(0.503)</td>
<td>(0.974)</td>
<td>(0.966)</td>
<td>(0.313)</td>
<td>(0.495)</td>
<td>(0.494)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita (ln)</td>
<td>0.604**</td>
<td>-0.313</td>
<td>-0.247</td>
<td>0.224</td>
<td>0.0232</td>
<td>0.0110</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.291)</td>
<td>(0.581)</td>
<td>(0.584)</td>
<td>(0.185)</td>
<td>(0.284)</td>
<td>(0.286)</td>
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<td>Democracy (Polity2 Average)</td>
<td>0.0130</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.0917</td>
<td>0.0485</td>
<td>0.110**</td>
<td>0.110**</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0556)</td>
<td>(0.104)</td>
<td>(0.107)</td>
<td>(0.0367)</td>
<td>(0.0534)</td>
<td>(0.0538)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees (ln)</td>
<td>0.0830</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>0.116**</td>
<td>0.207**</td>
<td>0.163*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0738)</td>
<td>(0.145)</td>
<td>(0.146)</td>
<td>(0.0508)</td>
<td>(0.0885)</td>
<td>(0.0921)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDPs (ln)</td>
<td>-0.0415</td>
<td>-0.0764</td>
<td>-0.103</td>
<td>0.0335</td>
<td>0.0562</td>
<td>0.0490</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0473)</td>
<td>(0.0844)</td>
<td>(0.0883)</td>
<td>(0.0329)</td>
<td>(0.0464)</td>
<td>(0.0457)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (ln)</td>
<td>-0.0642</td>
<td>0.0559</td>
<td>0.176</td>
<td>-0.0595</td>
<td>0.0440</td>
<td>0.159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.177)</td>
<td>(0.369)</td>
<td>(0.372)</td>
<td>(0.127)</td>
<td>(0.204)</td>
<td>(0.216)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel Strength</td>
<td>-0.313</td>
<td>-0.367</td>
<td>-0.249</td>
<td>-0.0929</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>0.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.326)</td>
<td>(0.524)</td>
<td>(0.538)</td>
<td>(0.244)</td>
<td>(0.344)</td>
<td>(0.346)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength Central</td>
<td>-1.114***</td>
<td>-0.914</td>
<td>-0.863</td>
<td>-0.652**</td>
<td>-0.666*</td>
<td>-0.696*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.414)</td>
<td>(0.660)</td>
<td>(0.662)</td>
<td>(0.276)</td>
<td>(0.377)</td>
<td>(0.383)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Intensity</td>
<td>1.281**</td>
<td>0.954</td>
<td>1.230</td>
<td>1.239***</td>
<td>1.113**</td>
<td>1.147**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.601)</td>
<td>(0.827)</td>
<td>(0.858)</td>
<td>(0.401)</td>
<td>(0.524)</td>
<td>(0.527)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Duration</td>
<td>0.409***</td>
<td>0.322</td>
<td>0.359</td>
<td>0.390***</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>0.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.132)</td>
<td>(0.326)</td>
<td>(0.334)</td>
<td>(0.103)</td>
<td>(0.198)</td>
<td>(0.204)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td>4.491</td>
<td>2.472</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.923)</td>
<td>(7.208)</td>
<td>(7.333)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.0395</td>
<td>-0.427</td>
<td>0.438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2.961)</td>
<td>(4.193)</td>
<td>(4.270)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.348</td>
<td>3.657</td>
<td>4.579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2.965)</td>
<td>(4.204)</td>
<td>(4.288)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R2</td>
<td>0.396</td>
<td>0.357</td>
<td>0.367</td>
<td>0.277</td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td>0.234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Models 3 and 6 consider the percentage of donors within a donor group that are democratic. Recalling that a donor is counted as democratic if its average polity2 score is +6 or higher, the sample in each model only considers those rebel groups that received external state support in a conflict-dyad period. Within each model, the coefficient is negative and significant at the .10 level suggesting that the more democratic states within a group of donor states, the less likely rebel recipients will use child soldiers (Model 3) and the less likely they will be used at high levels (Model 6) when they are recruited. This lends support to both hypotheses 2a and 2b and highlights the importance of considering the democratic characteristics of foreign sponsors. While foreign state support offers little explanation for rebel child soldiering, considering the percent of democratic states supporting a rebel organization provides some useful insight as to whether rebels will use children. Addressing a potential endogenous relationship, these findings might also suggest that rebels who refrain from child soldiering will be more likely to receive support from democratic donor groups.

Briefly examining the control variables, rebel groups that engage in higher levels of *One-sided Violence* against civilians are statistically more likely to use children as soldiers with

---

12 The number of observations drops significantly across these model specifications.
results robust across all models in Table 3. This is unsurprising as groups that engage in high levels of lethal violence have already demonstrated a propensity to violate human rights. Still, this suggests that rebels will often employ a diverse repertoire of violence which scholars would do well to consider. Turning to group characteristics, the coefficient for Secessionist Conflict is positive across all models, but significant only in Models 4 and 6. Though Lasley and Thyne (2015) find that groups vying for independence should be less likely to engage in child soldiering out of a need for international legitimacy, these findings point to an opposite effect and lend support to Jo’s (2015) argument that these groups are more likely to benefit from local volunteers mobilized along ethnic/nationalist lines, increasing the chances that children will be involved with the group. Rebel Strength has an inconclusive effect on child soldiering. However, the negative and significant coefficient for strength of a rebel group’s central command in Models 1 and 4-6 suggests that groups with strong central command structures are less likely to engage in child soldiering. Two points emerge. First, groups with strong hierarchical control may be better at internal discipline and can maintain more control over their combatants behavior, offering support for Weinstein’s (2007) argument that control structures matter for the employment of violence. Second, this finding suggest that avoiding child soldiering may be a conscious decision by rebel leaders who can enforce their decision over the sub-commanders.

Regarding supply-side controls (i.e. country-level characteristics), the majority are insignificant, suggesting that supply-side arguments often fail to fully account for factors leading to rebel child soldiering. However, Youth Unemployment and Refugees emerge as relevant indicators for situational factors that lead to rebel child soldiering. In Models 4-6 Refugees exhibit a positive and significant effect. States hosting a higher number of refugees are in turn, more likely to see rebel groups employ child soldiers. This lends support to previous findings
from Achvarina and Reich (2006) who suggest that vulnerable populations such as refugees offer rebels and easy pool of recruits. Unexpectedly, higher levels of Youth Unemployment are negatively associated with rebel child soldiering and significant across all models. While the theoretical expectation suggested that higher levels of unemployment across young populations would create a readily available supply of child soldiers, the findings suggest otherwise. This can likely be attributed to the age threshold which considers youth to be anyone between the ages of 15-24. The definition of a child soldier refers to anyone under the age of 18. Thus, in cases with high levels of youth unemployment, there is a readily available pool of individuals between 18 and 24 who may be preferable for rebel organizations.

Lastly, both conflict intensity and conflict duration exhibit a positive effect on rebel child soldiering. However, conflict duration is only significant in two models (Models 1 and 4) while conflict intensity is significant in four of the six models (Models 1 and 4-6). Together, there appears to be some support for a desperation theory of recruitment—that is in cases where conflicts are more violent and last longer, rebels are more likely to engage in child soldiering out of necessity.

Table 4. Human Rights Organizations (HROs) and Rebel Child Soldiering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 7 (Binary)</th>
<th>Model 8 (Binary)</th>
<th>Model 9 (Ordinal)</th>
<th>Model 10 (Ordinal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Democratic</td>
<td>-2.914**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.150**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.430)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.850)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total HROs (ln)</td>
<td>-0.0267</td>
<td>0.223</td>
<td>0.201</td>
<td>0.350**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.240)</td>
<td>(0.278)</td>
<td>(0.143)</td>
<td>(0.162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-sided Violence</td>
<td>0.0172</td>
<td>0.0179*</td>
<td>0.000532**</td>
<td>0.000603**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0107)</td>
<td>(0.0104)</td>
<td>(0.000240)</td>
<td>(0.000272)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Model 7 (Binary)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Estimate 1</th>
<th>Estimate 2</th>
<th>Estimate 3</th>
<th>Estimate 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secessionist Conflict</td>
<td>0.405</td>
<td>0.674</td>
<td>0.895</td>
<td>1.164**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.884)</td>
<td>(0.913)</td>
<td>(0.552)</td>
<td>(0.577)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Unemployment (ln)</td>
<td>-1.125</td>
<td>-1.530</td>
<td>-1.181***</td>
<td>-1.466***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.900)</td>
<td>(0.984)</td>
<td>(0.454)</td>
<td>(0.496)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita (ln)</td>
<td>-0.301</td>
<td>-0.247</td>
<td>-0.106</td>
<td>-0.0187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.583)</td>
<td>(0.585)</td>
<td>(0.265)</td>
<td>(0.286)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy (Polity2 Average)</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>0.0958</td>
<td>0.110**</td>
<td>0.118**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.106)</td>
<td>(0.107)</td>
<td>(0.0540)</td>
<td>(0.0549)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees (ln)</td>
<td>0.174</td>
<td>0.0925</td>
<td>0.213**</td>
<td>0.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.143)</td>
<td>(0.147)</td>
<td>(0.0851)</td>
<td>(0.0923)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDPs (ln)</td>
<td>-0.0818</td>
<td>-0.103</td>
<td>0.0446</td>
<td>0.0480</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0818)</td>
<td>(0.0887)</td>
<td>(0.0451)</td>
<td>(0.0462)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (ln)</td>
<td>-0.0560</td>
<td>0.184</td>
<td>-0.0865</td>
<td>0.190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.366)</td>
<td>(0.365)</td>
<td>(0.192)</td>
<td>(0.217)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel Strength</td>
<td>-0.361</td>
<td>-0.171</td>
<td>0.102</td>
<td>0.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.536)</td>
<td>(0.545)</td>
<td>(0.343)</td>
<td>(0.349)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength Central</td>
<td>-0.834</td>
<td>-0.922</td>
<td>-0.618*</td>
<td>-0.781**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.633)</td>
<td>(0.671)</td>
<td>(0.373)</td>
<td>(0.392)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Intensity</td>
<td>0.939</td>
<td>1.211</td>
<td>1.001*</td>
<td>1.085**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.804)</td>
<td>(0.864)</td>
<td>(0.518)</td>
<td>(0.536)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Duration</td>
<td>0.369</td>
<td>0.402</td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>0.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.303)</td>
<td>(0.345)</td>
<td>(0.193)</td>
<td>(0.210)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>2.056</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7.177)</td>
<td>(7.364)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-2.552</td>
<td>0.547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4.057)</td>
<td>(4.336)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.579</td>
<td>4.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4.044)</td>
<td>(4.357)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R2</td>
<td>0.335</td>
<td>0.374</td>
<td>0.219</td>
<td>0.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LogLik</td>
<td>-35.84</td>
<td>-33.68</td>
<td>-90.86</td>
<td>-86.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chi-square</td>
<td>36.15</td>
<td>40.16</td>
<td>50.91</td>
<td>59.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 presents results when considering the effect of human rights lobbies in an attempt to gauge how the strength of these institutions impact rebel child soldiering and if the density of these organizations might be driving the small democratic constraining effect seen in previous models.\textsuperscript{13} Models 7 and 9 report the effect of the natural logarithm of the total number of human rights organizations with a permanent office in a donor group on rebel child soldiering (binary and ordinal measures respectively). Although the coefficient is in the anticipated negative direction in Model 7, it is statistically insignificant. In Model 9, the coefficient’s sign flips, but remains insignificant. Taken together, this suggests that the strength/density of HROs within donor groups offer little explanatory power for rebel child soldiering when considered independent of other donor characteristics.

Given the insignificant result of HROs influence on rebel child soldiering in Models 7 and 9, Models 8 and 10 explore the effects of HROs and the percent of democratic donors simultaneously. The coefficient for HROs is positive in both models although only significant in Model 10. The positive coefficient runs counter to the expectation presented in the theory. One possible explanation might suggest that even if the density of HROs is high within donor groups, these organizations exert little influence on foreign policy decision making. However, in both models, the percent of democracies in a donor group exhibits a negative and significant effect on

\[ \text{probchi2} \begin{array}{cccc}
\text{Model 7 (Binary)} & \text{Model 8 (Binary)} & \text{Model 9 (Ordinal)} & \text{Model 10 (Ordinal)} \\
0.000562 & 0.000240 & 2.08e^{-06} & 1.72e^{-07} \\
\end{array} \]

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

\textsuperscript{13} This strategy follows that of Salehyan et al. (2014).
rebel child soldiering. This finding refutes arguments that HRO strength across donor groups is what drives democracies to refrain from supporting groups that use children (or for groups that receive support from democracies to avoid child soldiers). Rather, having a higher percentage of democratic donors results in a decreased probability of rebels using child soldiers or vice versa.

Most controls are consistent with previous models, though few reach levels of statistical significance. One-sided violence, youth unemployment, the host state’s level of democracy, strength central refugees, and conflict intensity each achieve statistical significance in at least one model specification, but I focus my discussion on the full models (Models 8 and 10). Rebels who commit higher rates of lethal violence and those active in more violent conflicts appear to be more likely to employ child soldiers. High levels of youth unemployment in a state decreases the chances that children will find themselves involved in rebel organizations which I largely attribute to the wide age range captured by the measure. Rebels’ central command structure can also help explain when they will refrain from child soldiering as those with strong central control are less likely to recruit child soldiers. Lastly, there is some indication that states with higher polity2 averages are more likely to see child soldiers in rebel groups. However, in nearly 80% of the states where rebels are receiving external state support, the conflict country is not democratic (<+6).

Overall, these analyses show that foreign state support by itself is not a useful factor for rebel child soldiering when only considering its presence or absence. However, when one goes deeper, considering the characteristics of the donor group, important insights arise. Specifically, rebels that receive support from donor groups comprised of a higher percentage of democratic states are less likely to recruit child soldiers, and if using child soldiers, will do so at lower rates. It is important to note the potential reverse causality highlighted earlier. It may also be that more
democratic donor groups are less likely to aid rebels who employ child soldiers, and if support is provided, will select only those rebels who use few child soldiers. The data limitations limit the ability to statistically test the directional relationship, but the findings point to a general association between donor state characteristics and rebel behavior. This underscores the importance of considering not only if rebels have external support, but rather, where the support is coming from. In addition, the findings show that scholars would do well to continue to examine rebels’ repertoires of violence and not solely lethal victimization.

Still, there are some inherent limitations within the statistical analyses which deserve further attention. The time invariant nature of the main dependent variables limits the causal inferences one can make. As discussed, the final samples across models are severely constrained. These are unavoidable shortcomings which limit the explanatory power in each model and call into question the strength of the democratic constraining effect. One cannot say conclusively that rebels who receive support from more democratic donor groups will always avoid using child soldiers and historical evidence shows that democracies, at times, will tolerate human rights abuses including child soldiering.

Case Studies

Owing to these limitations and to concerns related to the quantitative analyses, I briefly explore two cases to probe the theoretical argument. Lieberman (2005, 435) contends that small-N cases can be used assess the plausibility of observed statistical relationships. Given the inferences derived from the statistical analyses above, I use process tracing largely drawn from secondary source materials and probe two cases: the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK) in Turkey and the Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (PYD) in Syria, including its armed wing, the Yekineyen Parastina
Gel (YPG; also known as the People’s Defense Units) (Clawson 2016). The two cases were selected under a most similar systems design. Both cases share a number of similarities, yet differ on the main variable of interest (Seawright and Gerring 2008, 304). The PKK, established in 1978 and predominantly supported by autocratic regimes, employed child soldiers throughout its insurgency. The case of the PYD, a group which was established in 2003 and received substantial support from the United States, altered its behavior following increasing pressure from the international community over its child soldiering practices. At first glance, the case appears to be a deviant case given it is “as far as possible from the prediction” borne out in the statistical analyses (Seawright and Gerring 2008, 302). However, the PYD appears to have changed its practices in response to concerns that the group might lose Western support. The following analysis helps explain why the group benefited from democratic support and how the broader theoretical argument of the interaction between donor states and rebel groups can impact recruitment behavior.

The PKK

Founded in the late 1970s, the PKK launched its official insurgency against the Turkish government in 1984 with the primary goal of establishing an independent Kurdish state (Roth and Sever 2007). When the organization was born, it encountered an environment already ripe with nearly a dozen other Kurdish nationalist organizations each of which was more established (Tezcür, 2015). These Kurdish nationalist groups engaged in a variety of activities including publishing journals/newspapers, organizing youth groups and professional organizations, mobilizing candidates for elections, and so on (Tezcür 2015, 249). Even entering this competitive organizational environment, the PKK became the dominant Kurdish nationalist
group within Turkey by 1984 when it initiated guerrilla warfare in southeastern Turkey with the goal of establishing an independent Kurdistan. Over the course of the next three decades, the PKK has experienced variability in the reality of achieving its political and nationalist goals.

What has remained relatively constant is the PKK’s employment of child soldiers. Based on data drawn from the Kurdish Insurgency Militants (KIM), which has demographic information for more than 9,000 individuals, the PKK had children in their organization (under 18) as early as 1976 (Tezcür 2016). However, the numbers of child soldiers spiked drastically between 1990 and 1994 when the conflict was most intense. Estimates claim that upwards of 3,000 children served in the organization (Child Soldiers International 2008; Singer, 2006) with the KIM dataset reporting a confirmed minimum of over 2,100. Throughout its existence, the PKK received external support from a variety of non-state actors, including substantial support from the Kurdish diaspora. Also, from the start of the group’s insurgency in Turkey in 1984 until Ocalan’s capture in 1999, the PKK received significant support from foreign governments including Syria and Iran and intermittently from other autocratic states including the USSR/Russia, and Iraq. Syria supported the PKK with access to territory which assisted the group in both recruitment efforts and provided training grounds. Iran offered similar forms of support but also provided the PKK with financing. In 1994, Greece, a democratic state, joined the list of foreign state donors, also aiding the Kurdish movement largely in the form of territorial sanctuary until Ocalan’s arrest in 1999. After the group’s leader was captured, the PKK relied mostly on funding from its large diaspora. It also established the PYD in Syria and the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) in Iran in 2004. While the list of supporters is not exhaustive given all the various supporters of the PKK during its campaign in Turkey, they illustrate a dominate theme, the vast majority of donor states (with the exception of Greece) were
autocratic regimes, particularly during their years as supporters of the PKK. In addition, many democratic states were hostile to the PKK including Germany and the United States who would formally designate the PKK a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) in 1993 and 1997, respectively (Eliaçık 2018; Department of State 1997).

Strategic interests, regime rivalries, and domestic pressures all contributed to foreign states’ decisions to provide support. Though the PKK appears to have included children prior to its receipt of foreign state sponsorship, it is clear that the organization faced little pressure from donors pertaining to human rights practices with no clear condemnation of the group’s child soldiering practices coming from its main supporters of Syria and Iran. Iran, in particular, had used child soldiers throughout its conflict with Iraq and its polity2 score ranged from -6 to +3 in the years it provided support to the PKK. Syria has consistently scored poorly on aggregate human rights scales such as the Political Terror Scale; for the majority of the time it supported the PKK, Syria a polity2 score of -9. Given the nature of each regime, neither government was not concerned with the PKK’s human rights practices. The PKK would not credibly fear a loss of support as a consequences of its child soldiering practices. Importantly, the height of Turkish counterinsurgency policies in the early and mid 1990s led to high casualty rates amongst the PKK, resulting in an increase in the rate of child soldiering. Greece’s support in the early 1990s, despite the PKK’s use of children offers an illustration of how any democratic constraining effect might be washed out when autocratic donors are the majority. In addition, and for the case of Greece, a weakly institutionalized democracy, it appears that human rights abuses were of secondary importance. In general, the case of the PKK illustrates the plausibility of the theory that rebels receiving support from autocratic donors are more likely to use child soldiers, either
because they are unlikely to face retribution, or because donor states lack democratic characteristics that might otherwise constrain their support for rebels that recruit child soldiers.

The PYD

The PYD was founded in 2003 in Syria as an affiliate of the PKK in Turkey (Gunter 2015). The group’s connection to the PKK created complications for its ability to garner support from Western states, most notably those aligned with Turkey (i.e. NATO). However the outbreak of the Syrian civil war and the rise of the Islamic State ushered in a dramatic shift in how the PYD would come to be viewed by prominent members of NATO, in particular the United States. The PYD and as its armed wing, the YPG, has largely been commended for its success as a formidable adversary to the Islamic State in Syria. As the Syrian conflict continued to escalate, so too did the question of what the US would do in the Syrian conflict. What eventually transpired was US support for the YPG in the form of military assistance, first through air support and later in the distribution of weapons and training.

The US military involvement in Syria began in September 2014 as President Obama ordered airstrikes and lobbied for Congress to approve support to arm and train rebels fighting the Islamic State or Iraq and Syria (ISIS). With bipartisan support, the US began its formal aerial campaign in Syria, conducting half a dozen attacks between September 22nd and September 30th, 2014. Direct support of the PYD/YPG is largely recognized to have commenced in early October 2014 as the US continued to conduct air-strikes in Syria. On October 1st, 2014, the US launched airstrikes in the Syrian Kurdistan city of Kobani (Kobane) in support of the YPG and Free Syrian Army.
While the US continued to provide support to the Syrian Kurds including the PYD, allegations of human rights abuses from all parties in the Syrian civil war were widespread. Outside of the severe levels of lethal violence employed against the civilians were continued allegations of child soldier usage by nearly all non-state actors including ISIS, the Free Syrian Army, and the PYD/YPG (UN General Assembly Security Council 2016). For instance, in July 2015, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that the PYD/YPG, despite early commitments to demobilize child soldiers within its ranks, continued to recruit and use those under the age of 18 as combatants (HRW 2015). Between 2014 and 2015 HRW documented at least 59 reported cases of children being recruited by or joining the YPG with 10 of these cases being children under the age of 15.

The general command of the PYD/YPG responded to these allegations in a letter to HRW in late July 2015 claiming that the organization had taken significant steps to minimize their use of children while claiming that ISIS has been heavily indiscriminate in their practices towards civilians (General Command of the People’s Protection Units 2015). In essence, PYD/YPG officials noted that the conflict environment, marked by particular brutality, constrained their ability to direct all attention toward eliminating child soldiering within their rank-and-file. A similar letter was sent to the PYD/YPG in June 2018, continuing to invoke concerns over the groups sustained usage of child soldiers and requesting a formal response (HRW 2018). Amidst this continued pressure, the commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces (which encompass the YPG and include ethnic Arab fighters) issued a signed statement claiming that children are “strictly prohibited from joining the SDF” and that “every member of the SDF forces under the age of 18 must be transferred directly to concerned civil authorities” (Wilgenburg 2018).

Meanwhile, the US continued to offer support to the PYD, but Turkey’s continued agitation over
this support along with the trajectory of the Syrian conflict raises many questions about how long
the US will continue to back the Syrian Kurds.

On its surface, US support of the PYD/YPG appears to undermine the democratic
constraining effect identified by the statistical analyses presented earlier. However, closer
examination clearly reveals that the group has attempted to respond to critiques related to its
child soldiering behavior, going so far as to formally respond to accusations while issuing
organizational wide orders to refrain from the recruitment of children and to release those who
might remain in the rank and file. Further, the case illuminates how conflict dynamics, coupled
with the shifting behavior of the PYD/YPG (at least in discursive level), might lead democracies
to continue to fund rebels in spite of their child soldiering practices. The fact that the PYD/YPG
formally acknowledged the presence of children and has taken some initiative to eradicate child
soldiers within the organization suggests that rebels might be willing to shift behavior to appease
donors in an effort to ensure continued support. This obviously highlights the endogenous
relationship that might exist via the statistical tests presented, but also shows how both
mechanisms likely have some validity.

At least two alternative explanations are worth noting. First, the PYD/YPG’s role in
battling ISIS in Syria cannot be overlooked in explaining the support by democratic countries.
The group has been lauded as one of the most reliable and effective in combating the Islamic
State. American national security interests have clearly been pivotal, and even prioritized, over
the group’s human rights practices. Still, the group’s recognition and shifting behavior related to
the inclusion of children in its ranks elucidates the probability of a democratic constraining
effect. For instance, reports largely suggest that those child soldiers that remain within the
organization are far away from the frontlines and are often involved in manning checkpoints in
roles that might better be classified as policing (Hauch 2019). Secondly, the secular nature of the PYD/YPG and the group’s incorporation of women as seen with the all-female units known as the YPJ might assist the group in overcoming the critical aspects of its recruitment practices. For example, its inclusion of women volunteers can be viewed as a more progressive form of recruitment in comparison to more violent recruitment practices by groups like the RUF in Sierra Leone. While the United States has not been directly involved in the ‘naming and shaming’ of the group, the negative press appeared to increase organizational concerns over the continuation of Western support should their behavior not shift.

**Discussion and Implications**

Previous scholarship has shown that foreign state support can impact rebels’ levels of lethal violence towards non-combatants. This study expands on previous work by investigating an overlooked form of rebel violence against civilians; child soldiering. Building on a principal-agent model suggesting that certain principals (states) will be unwilling to tolerate agents’ (rebels’) recruitment of children, the findings point to two probable relationships. First, donor groups with a higher concentration of democratic states are less likely to support rebels who use child soldiers. Secondly, rebel groups are likely to consider who their state sponsors are and behave accordingly to ensure continued support.

These findings also show that the strength (density) of human rights organizations within donor groups does not drive the negative association between the percent of democratic donor states and rebel child soldiering. This deviates from previous work which suggested that any democratic effect constraining rebels’ lethal violence ‘washed out’ when considering the strength of the donors’ human rights lobbies (Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood 2014). Regardless of the
density of the human rights network within donor states, democratic states appear more
cognizant of the types of rebels they are willing to support.

While this study contributes to the scholarship on micro-level forms of civilian
victimization, and highlights a need to continue to investigate rebels’ repertoire of violence, it
faces several important limitations. First, as noted, annual data on rebel child soldiering is
currently unavailable, limiting the ability to understand at what point in time a group chooses to
recruit children. Improvements in data will undoubtedly provide more fruitful insight on rebel
child soldiering practices and the mechanisms that lead to this behavior. While the case
explorations presented here do provide some insight on the patterns of recruitment, they also
highlight the challenge in identifying clear start points. Second, the PKK and PYD case studies
provide information on rebels’ dependency on foreign donors, but an examination of dependency
across a larger selection of cases would be useful. This could provide meaningful insight on
donor states’ ability to constrain rebels and influence their behavior towards non-combatants. In
similar fashion, considering the various types of support—provision of weapons, territory,
money, etc.—may also provide more meaningful insight on the interactions amongst donors and
recipients. Rebels relying on foreign state sponsors for critical support such as weapons,
financial backing, territory, etc. may be more likely to behave in line with donors’ expectations
than those groups who only receive minimal support from a foreign backer. The PYD/YPG’s
rhetorical shift is suggestive of such.

Research on civil wars, particularly those studying the relationships amongst rebels and
civilians, should continue to consider how foreign donors affect child recruitment and other
forms of victimization. The long-term consequences of civilian victimization have recently been
highlighted in the literature with the scholars suggesting that child soldiering can lead to
recurring conflicts (Haer and Böhmelt 2016b) and have detrimental effects on the psyche of former child combatants. While accountability for rebels that engage in child soldiering should continue, external state sponsors of violent rebels must also be reprimanded by the international community if human rights are to be championed.
References


CHAPTER THREE: PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF WOMEN AND CHILD SOLDIERS

Abstract

Why are some rebellions inclusive of both women and children while others are more likely to use child soldiers, but exclude women? Variance in rebel group composition has become an increasingly examined aspect of civil conflict literature. Recently, scholars have offered a range of systematic investigations on the role of women in non-state armed groups, finding that over half of all rebel organizations incorporate women in some capacity with 30 to 40 percent using women as combatants. At the same time, scholars examining the recruitment and use of child soldiers show that upwards of 75 percent of all rebellions use child soldiers. While literature has explored determinants of women and children in rebel organizations independently, scholars have yet to examine their intersection in rebel recruitment processes. Using new data on women and children in armed groups, this project explores patterns across rebellions that are associated with the presence or absence of certain populations. This descriptive investigation reveals that the majority of groups include both women and children, and that ethnonationalist organizations are most likely to align with this pattern. In addition to uncovering patterns through descriptive insights, the paper engages in theory-building to offer several plausible explanations of the conditions that might contribute to rebels’ preferences for children over women. Those groups seeking to avoid patriarchal backlash and organizations operating in societies with higher levels of gender inequality are expected to be most likely to exclude women while recruiting children. Whether an insurgency operates in a rural or urban setting also emerges as an important factor in groups’ preferences for children.
Introduction

What explains rebel groups’ preferences for different types of combatants? Specifically, while most rebel groups choose to recruit and rely predominantly on men, why do some diversify to include certain demographics over others? Along these lines, why might rebels choose to recruit child soldiers, but exclude women soldiers? Though recent empirical assessments have noted that well over half of all rebellions include women (Henshaw 2016a) with upwards of 40 percent where rebels use women as combatants (Wood and Thomas 2017; Braithwaite and Ruiz 2018), child soldiers appear to be used with even more regularity.¹⁴ Scholars have found that upwards of 75 percent of rebellions active in the post-Cold War environment use child soldiers (Lasley and Thyne 2015; Haer and Böhmelt 2016a). However, while scholars have assessed the participation of both women and children independently, the literature has yet to examine what factors contribute to the inclusion of both women and child soldiers and what factors lead to the exclusion of one over the other.

This is perplexing for at least three reasons. First, much of the literature on intrastate conflict draws attention to ‘manpower’ shortages within rebel campaigns which increases the demand for combatants, even leading groups to adopt coercive recruitment tactics (Gates 2002; Eck 2014; Wood 2014). If this is the case, one should expect less selective practices related to the types of recruits within rebels’ ranks as the viability of rebellion depends, in part, on its ability to mobilize participants. While organizations as diverse as the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK) in Turkey and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda chose to include both

¹⁴ It should be noted that in this investigation, children means both boys and girls. Until recently, there has been limited investigation into gender differences amongst child soldiers.
women and children, albeit often through different recruitment practices, others like the Committee for Action for Peace and Democracy (CSNPD) in Chad, the Justice and Equality (JEM) Movement in Sudan, and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Philippines chose to only include children despite being significantly weaker than the governments they fight. Secondly, historical accounts clearly demonstrate that women are capable of performing in conflict both as combatants and in support roles (Goldstein 2001) with recent scholarship even suggesting the inclusion of women combatants can increase rebels’ likelihood of achieving victory (Braithwaite and Ruiz 2018). Both the National Resistance Army in Uganda and the Revolutionary Patriotic Front in Rwanda, for example, included female combatants in their successful campaigns. Further, the military success of groups like the Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG), the armed wing of the Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (PYD) in Syria, illustrates the potential benefits of women’s inclusion, with early reports noting that one in five of its fighters was female (Heffez 2013), that eventually led to the creation of a women’s militant wing known as the YPJ (Simsek and Jongerden 2018). Third, the exclusion of women and inclusion of children is even more perplexing when one considers the efficacy of child soldiers. While scholarly arguments have suggested they are more loyal and cheaper to retain, children may lack the physical and emotional maturity to perform successfully in war (Singer 2005a; Kimmel and Roby 2007; Beber and Blattman 2013). Although recent scholarship has challenged this notion, finding that children might actually improve rebels’ fighting capacity (Haer and Böhmelt 2016a), there remains limited exploration into why women might still be excluded.

The paper proceeds in several parts. First, I offer a review of the literature on child soldiering focusing on rebels’ decisions to recruit children. Second, I examine the growing literature on women’s involvement across rebel organizations with particular attention given to
recent work suggesting political ideology as a main driver of the variance in women’s participation. Next, the paper explores cross-sectional data on women’s participation in rebel groups and compares this with data on child soldiering across rebellions. Given that arguments in the literature contend that groups with progressive ideologies are those most likely to employ women while those groups that recruit children are often considered norms violators, one should not expect to see many groups with both women and children fighters. In other words, recruiting women is seen as a progressive move by rebels while recruiting children is not.\(^\text{15}\) Employing an inductive strategy using an examination of data on women and children’s participation in rebellions active between 1990-2008, I find that a clear majority of groups that included women also employed child soldiers. My analysis also suggests that nearly one quarter of rebel groups employed child soldiers while excluding women in any capacity. Building on these descriptive insights, the paper suggests that the inclusion of both women and children can be attributed, in large part, to rebel groups’ ideology in two distinct ways: a) ethnic and/or religious nationalist groups appear less selective in recruitment (gender and age); b) Islamist groups often exclude women, but when they do recruit women, they also include children. The paper then proceeds to engage with additional explanations as to why groups exclude women while including children. Building on prior literature, I posit that societal gender inequalities, groups’ attempts to avoid the risk of patriarchal backlash, and the type of insurgency (rural vs. urban) can lead rebels to exclude women while incorporating children. Children, I suggest, can augment group capabilities without undermining patriarchal structures and this is most likely to occur in rural insurgencies because these environments are often more conservative. The paper concludes with a brief

\(^{15}\) The assumption here is that recruitment is not coercive.
discussion of implications for the study of rebel group composition and directions for future research.

**Determinants of Child Soldiers**

Child soldiers continue to be employed by both rebels and governments, remaining a significant human rights issue in both scale and extremity (O’Neil 2018). The majority of scholarship on child soldiers depicts the practice as either a consequence of conflict environments or the result of organizational demands. The former, known as supply-side arguments, focus heavily on the societal conditions that lead children to join rebel organizations, generally referred to as push factors. Within these explanations are arguments contending that lack of employment, insufficient access to basic health care and nutrition, limited opportunities for education, and high rates of unemployment can increase the likelihood that children are driven towards participation in rebel groups (Cohn and Goodwin-Gill 1994; Machel 1996; Honwana 2006; Singer 2005a; Brett and Specht 2004; Becker 2010; UNICEF Nigeria 2017). While poor economic conditions can increase the supply of children, conflict can also lead to high rates of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugee camps, destitute communities, and increasing homelessness which only enlarges the pool of potential child recruits for rebel groups (Achvarina and Reich 2006; Singer 2005a).

While these supply-side arguments have provided insights into the motivations of child volunteers and conditions increasing rebel access to vulnerable populations, they cannot fully account for variance in rebels’ employment of children given that they are generally consistent across conflicts. Demand-side explanations focus explicitly on rebel organizations’ cost-benefit analyses of employing child soldiers and examine the motivations of the recruiters. Such
motivations include troop shortages/quotas and whether the intensity of conflict demands increasing levels of human capital to maintain rebellion (Blattman and Annan 2008; Machel 1996; Tynes 2011; Wood 2014). Others suggest that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons have made children operationally effective for rebel groups as they were previously viewed as incapable of operating heavy and cumbersome hardware (Singer 2005a; Turshen 1998, 7).

Children’s inexpensiveness, ease of indoctrination, and increased level of loyalty have also been identified as useful explanations for their demand (Beber and Blattman 2013). Similarly, rebels’ pursuit and exploitation of natural resources can increase their demand for children, both to solidify access to and extraction of valuable natural resources, and because children are easier to keep from pecuniary benefits (Faulkner et al. 2019; Haer et al. 2019). Some have even suggested that organizations recruiting children do so to increase their fighting capacity and effectiveness (Haer and Böhmelt 2016a). According to former Force Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), Roméo Dallaire, numerous groups have employed children for this very reason as they can hinder the effectiveness of government militaries. Put differently, children can help weak rebel groups as killing a child is difficult (Dallaire 2018). However, there remains a lack of consensus on their overall efficacy as fighters (Andvig and Gates 2010; Beber and Blattman 2013).

While child soldiering is widely viewed as a violation of international norms, the recruitment and use of women in rebellion is often viewed in a positive light (notwithstanding cases of forced recruitment for purposes of sexual exploitation and/or to be used as suicide bombers). While a number of the factors identified in the child soldiering literature may be plausible explanations for women’s participation in rebellion, the predominant themes in
literature on women’s recruitment and participation in rebellion has emphasized societal norms (Kampwirth 2002; Coulter 2008; Thomas and Wood 2018), ideological motivations (Wood and Thomas 2017), bids for external legitimacy and support (Parkinson 2013), and efforts to signal resolve (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007). This is not to say that these factors alone predict when women will be included or excluded from rebel groups, but the lack of attention given to the reasons for child soldiering in the presence and/or absence of women is an important oversight as the same ‘progressive’ explanations for women’s participation might also connect to the violation of norms against child soldiering. The next section looks more closely at the state of the literature on women’s participation in rebellion.

**Women’s Participation in Armed Groups**

Until recently, scholarship on civil conflict has either “underrepresented, overlooked, or completely ignored the experience of women” (Henshaw 2016a, 41). This has largely been attributed to the perception of violent conflict as an inherently “masculine” concept (Shepherd 2008; Runyan and Peterson 2013; Henshaw 2016b). Further, gendered norms often equate men with aggression and violence while women are viewed as more pacific and conflict averse (Fukuyama 1998; Alison 2009) leading to conflict environments which discourages female participation on the frontlines. However, historical and recent empirical assessments show that women are often active participants in conflict (Enloe 1990; MacKenzie 2009; Sjoberg and Gentry 2016; Henshaw 2016a, 2016; Wood and Thomas 2017; Thomas and Wood 2018). In fact, women have played an active role in the majority of conflicts in the post-Cold War era (Henshaw 2016a, 2016b). Moreover, apart from support roles, Henshaw’s study demonstrated that women have taken up arms in up to a third of armed groups, by conservative estimates. Regional
investigations focusing on violent political actors Africa (Thomas and Bond 2015) and a recent cross-national investigation focused exclusively on female combatants (Wood and Thomas 2017) have echoed Henshaw’s findings about women’s participation, showing that women served in combat roles in as many as 40 percent of rebel groups.  

Given women’s degree of visibility across rebel groups it is interesting to explore why a significant number of organizations choose to exclude women from their movements even as they recruit and employ children. After all, as Goldstein (2001) notes, adult women often possess physical traits that make them far superior than children in conflict (i.e. strength, endurance). Those scholars that have sought to understand where women rebel have often adopted a similar supply-demand framework to those investigating children’s participation in armed groups. Thomas and Bond (2015) suggests that much of the literature on women’s participation in violent organizations has focused heavily on supply-side of the equation with less attention given to the reasons groups demand women or exclude them altogether. Those focused on the supply-side argue that women are motivated to join rebel groups for myriad reasons including to enact revenge (Alison 2009), for social and political mobility and empowerment (Bhadra et al. 2007), and generally, as a way to reorient patriarchal relations within society as participation can improve prospects for equality during the conflict (Tezcür 2019). Women have also been found to join rebellions in an effort to redress economic grievances (Henshaw 2016b). Moreover, increased societal integration of women, chiefly in economic and educational institutions in pre-

16 Thomas and Bond (2015) look at violent political organizations in Africa while Wood and Thomas (2017) look at a global sample of 211 rebel groups, but only distinguish between those groups that use females in combat roles and those that exclude women from such roles.
conflict periods, is a significant determinant of women's participation as combatants in conflict (Thomas and Wood 2018, 227-228).

While the supply-side focuses on women’s agency in joining rebellion, equally important is the demand-side of the equation, reemphasizing how group composition is also a function of rebels’ cost-benefit analysis (Henshaw 2016a). Examining demand factors, Thomas and Bond (2015) point to organizational characteristics as important predictors of female participation within violent political organizations active in Africa. Larger rebel groups, those employing terrorist attacks, and groups adopting positive gender ideologies were statistically more likely to seek out and allow women into their organizations. Exploring the theoretical explanations, Thomas and Bond (2015, 490-491) argue first that small groups might be less inclined to use women out of concern of threats to group cohesion as the incorporation of subgroups within society can increase the likelihood of internal conflict. At the same time, organizations adopting terrorist tactics are more likely to use women as they can offer the group a strategic advantage (Bloom 2007). Women can be especially useful in clandestine operations and may even increase a group’s fighting effectiveness given their ability to conceal themselves (Bloom 2012). This is particularly true for groups which employ suicide terrorism (Thomas and Wood 2018). Further, groups espousing positive gender ideologies, whether genuine or strategic, are more likely to attract women recruits. In addition, they want to do so to ensure their composition aligns with rhetoric.

Yet another aspect of female participation suggests that intergroup competition can increase rebels’ demand for women (Thomas and Bond 2015). However, this competition may

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17 By a similar logic, children could offer the same advantage yet quantitative evidence is lacking.
be dependent upon competitor groups’ treatment of women. For example, in Eritrea, the EPLF’s incorporation of women forced their predecessor—the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF)—to reconsider their position on female participation, leading the group to increase its use of women in all facets of the organization (Thomas and Bond 2015, 502-503). In short, environmental pressure can influence groups’ recruitment of women. In similar fashion Viterna (2013, 11), argues that including women within rebel organizations can be a strong tool for insurgent groups as it helps them overcome negative connotations of “radicalness” often attributed to violent political movements. In short, the inclusion of women can improve rebels’ reputation amongst certain audiences and in particular, foreign and domestic audiences that see the recruitment of women as a progressive step. If accurate, it becomes even more perplexing why certain groups would forego the use of women while still choosing to employ child soldiers. However, this is a potentially useful explanation for why groups that use women might also see children present.18

Returning to the impact of positive gender ideologies, scholars have argued that Marxist groups, along with other leftist oriented organizations are most likely to incorporate women, and in higher numbers (Wood and Thomas 2017). This aligns with the foundations of Marx and Engles who clearly depicted the need for reformation in society, claiming that “doing away with the status of women as mere instruments of production” was central to the goal of Communism (Marx and Engels 1848/1978). Further, Gal and Kligman (2000, 5) noted that socialism, generally speaking, aimed to “erase gender differences,” although this varied significantly across regimes and over time. Contrarily, those groups with ideological foundations rooted in the

18 An additional argument might be that including women can increase the likelihood of children being present in a group.
preservation of traditional hierarchical gender structures, often relegating women to subservient positions in society, were identified as those less likely to have women participants. Even if these groups are inclusive of women, their roles, more often than not, are in non-combat positions. This is often done to ensure the hierarchical structures and gendered power imbalances in society persist during and after conflict (Henshaw 2016a).

However, even when groups do employ women in combatant roles, which positions them closer to equal with their male counterparts, it does not guarantee the elimination of inequality. Groups like the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), for instance, utilized women in a variety of roles including as active combatants in spite of societal constraints (Viterna 2013, 130). The incorporation of women appeared to challenge traditional gender hierarchical structures within El Salvador. Nonetheless, women from the FMLN illustrate how traditional gender identities were not genuinely altered after conflict as pre-war norms were “easily reestablished,” a concept identified in the literature as patriarchal backlash (Viterna 2013, 195; Kandiyoti 1991). Zimbabwe’s armed struggle against Rhodesia also saw women actively fight only to see them relegated to roles such as secretaries after the conflict (Seidman 1984).

Lastly, scholars point to rebels’ adoption of forced recruitment strategies as a plausible indicator for women’s participation in rebellion (Henshaw 2016a,b; Thomas and Bond 2015; Wood and Thomas 2017). Thomas and Bond (2015) postulate that groups adopt forced recruitment tactics for a number of reasons, not the least of which is to replace disgruntled members and for leaders to enjoy less blowback from the membership pertaining to their decision-making. Their findings show that organizations using forced recruitment techniques are indeed more likely to use women (Thomas and Bond 2015; Wood and Thomas 2017). Yet comparing data from a recent investigation by Haer et al. (2019) that explores rebels’ forcible
recruitment there are a number of rebel groups that forcibly recruit children while excluding women, suggesting a particular reason for their absence.

Overall, research has yet to examine why groups that exclude women choose to use child soldiers or consider the intersection between these two populations during conflict periods. Group ideology has clearly been a robust explanation for women’s exclusion/inclusion, but does little to explain why children may be recruited. Children’s purported cost, ease of indoctrination, and increased loyalty (Beber and Blattman 2013; Andvig and Gates 2010) are factors used to help explain why groups may demand them. However, women can significantly help rebellions while the efficacy of children and their impact on conflict outcomes remains in question. Thus, further investigation is warranted.

In the next section, I explore the composition of 72 rebel groups demonstrating how current explanations in both literatures are not sufficient for fully explaining the variance across rebel groups. I identify that ethno-religious/nationalist groups, after excluding Islamist organizations, are those most likely to see both women and children present. I suggest this can be explained, in part, by their ability to mobilize popular support. In other words, these groups are most likely to benefit from social endowments (Weinstein 2007). I also offer two additional theoretical insights.

First, I posit that for groups that include children, the inclusion of women can assist rebels in overcoming the negative connotations of norm violation that often result from child soldiering. Secondly, building on recent work on societal conditions as determinants for women’s inclusion/exclusion as combatants (Thomas and Wood 2018), I contend that gender inequality in pre-conflict periods can assist in understanding when women will be absent while children remain a viable option for rebel organizations. Specifically, I develop theoretical
arguments which suggest the inclusion of children in the absence of women can ensure the continuation of patriarchal structures given children’s lack of autonomy, status in society, and the diminished likelihood that groups will suffer internal backlash from their adult members or from children. This latter argument related to overcoming patriarchal norms may be conditional upon the type of armed struggle an organization pursues. For instance, patriarchal relations are likely to be stronger in rural settings in comparison to urban environments. Rural insurgencies must overcome their patriarchal biases before including women, and even though their inclusion may help the insurgency, the patriarchal impediments may be non-negotiable. However, in rural environments, barriers to the incorporation of children are less likely as children’s status in society is perceived differently than their urban counterparts. In contrast, urbanite groups may traditionally appeal to women who have, at least in part, altered their position in the patriarchy.

For instance, Tezcür (2019) notes that the although the PKK adopted a recruitment strategy which targeted a diverse pool of female recruits (rural and urban), the majority of women recruited in urban centers were college educated, many had a history of political activism, and their patterns of mobilization into the group were often driven by senses of injustice both by the state and within their familial relationships. As such, rebel groups must diversify their messages dependent upon the types of recruits they desire.

Patterns of Rebellion

In this section, I review new cross-sectional data on the use of women by non-state armed groups (NSAGs) (Henshaw 2016a). Through this review I uncover at least two important points about group composition. First, though the majority of rebel organizations employ children and women, at least twenty percent of insurgencies include child soldiers without including women.
Secondly, in nearly every case that women are present in a rebel group, regardless of position, so too are children. On its surface this seems unexpected given the importance attached to progressive ideology in explaining the employment of women. One plausible explanation is that rebel groups see benefit in less discriminatory recruitment practices which can increase group size and human resources. This is especially likely for ethnonationalist rebellions which by their nature attempt to mobilize popular support. A second explanation, as proposed above, is that the inclusion of women can offset the negative press of including children. The PYD in Syria has been praised widely by Western audiences for their inclusion of women combatants including the all-female units known as the YPJ (Gunes and Lowe 2015). Though still facing criticism by human rights groups and rival states such as Turkey, the inclusion of women and success in the conflict against ISIS afforded the group assistance from Western governments, most notably the United States. Put differently, though the PYD’s Kurdish roots and nationalism can help explain the diverse set of recruits, the inclusion of women offset negative effects from child soldiering. Further, maternal ties could also lead to the simultaneous presence of women and children, although the regularity of such instances is questionable for many groups. For instance, the PKK included both women and children, but preferred unmarried recruits and often attracted female members that encountered family issues at home such as forced marriage or physical abuse (Marcus 2009, 42; Özeren 2014, 331).

To begin, I examined Henshaw’s (2016a) random sample of 72 rebel organizations active between 1990 and 2008. The sample is drawn from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program’s (UCDP) Intrastate Armed Conflict Dataset (ACD) (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Petterson and Eck 2018). Henshaw’s data are novel in two specific ways. First, her analysis provides a glimpse into the specific role of women within NSAGs, correcting shortcomings within previous cross-
national studies that focused solely on male combatants in conflict. Second, her analysis establishes an empirical basis to more fully consider the conditions that lead to women’s presence within armed rebellions. Next, I reconciled Henshaw’s data with new information on women’s participation exclusively in combat roles (Thomas and Wood 2018). In the event that Henshaw reported the absence of women in any capacity and Thomas and Wood report the presence of female combatants, I categorized the group as having employed women.\(^\text{19}\) I then combined this data with data on rebel child soldiering drawn from Haer and Böhmelt (2016a), discussed in detail below. In addition to providing information on the presence or absence of women across rebel groups, Henshaw categorizes women’s participation into four distinct classifications: combatant, noncombatant, leadership role, and forced participant (2016a, 44).\(^\text{20}\) Of the 72 groups, 49 saw women participate in some capacity. The remaining 23 groups were reported as having no women participants. As Henshaw (2016a) notes, this constitutes a clear majority of rebel groups operating in the post-Cold War world as incorporating women. In addition, less than a third of the groups with women present appear to have engaged in forced recruitment, a deviation from the traditional narrative of victimization often used to explain the incorporation of women in rebel organizations (Mazurana et al. 2002; MacKenzie 2012).\(^\text{21}\)

\(^{19}\) I chose this strategy as Thomas and Wood (2018) only sought to identify if women were present in combat roles. This is a more restrictive coding approach and should bias against overreporting. In addition, Henshaw (2016a) notes that her dataset would benefit from efforts aimed at intercoder reliability whereas Thomas and Bond (2018) used multiple coders in their data gathering efforts. In total, they find evidence for women’s participation as combatants in six groups for which Henshaw (2016a) found no evidence of women’s participation.

\(^{20}\) Importantly, these categories are not mutually exclusive. In addition, Henshaw (2016a) adopted a conservative approach in coding, stating that a minimum of three sources had to identify women serving in a particular capacity before they would receive a coding of 1 for that respective classification.

\(^{21}\) Henshaw notes a minimum of three sources had to indicate that forced participation tactics were being used and concluded the presence of forced participation techniques regardless of gender.
Before turning to the intersection between women’s and children’s participation it is important to clarify issues related to coding of rebel child soldiering and the ability to compare with data on women’s participation. First is the issue of age delineation as various cross-national investigations have defined a child soldier as under the age of 18 while others opted for a lower age threshold set at below 15 (Lasley and Thyne 2015; Tynes and Early 2015). Much of this debate is a consequence of the various definitions of a child employed over time in international conventions and treaties such as the 1989 Convention on the Rights of a Child (UN 1989), the 1997 Cape Town Principles (UNICEF 1997), and the 2002 Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (UN 2000). The majority of recent quantitative scholarship, including the Haer and Böhmelt (2016a) sample employed in this study, utilizes the higher age threshold, defining child soldiers as: “any person below 18 years of age who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members.”

Secondly, data on child soldiering is difficult to obtain and consequently, much of the literature has relied on dichotomous and ordinal measures (Haer and Böhmelt 2016a). In other words, data on rebel child soldiering can only account for children’s presence or absence within a rebellion with estimates identifying the scale at which they are used at any point during

22 Influential reports on children in conflict including the 1996 Machel Report, the UN 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 1 of the 2000 optional protocol to the convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict have each either identified or used the 18 years of age threshold. Still, this definition is not without controversy as some suggest we consider a more constrained age threshold of 15 years of age and below to identify child soldiers (Tynes and Early 2015).
This limits the ability to draw certain inferences about when children first become involved with these groups and the specific roles they may occupy after being recruited into an organization. Data on female participation has, in part, addressed the latter. Though limiting the ability to compare differences between children’s roles and women’s roles within rebellion, some interesting patterns still emerge.

Table 5. Comparing Children and Women in NSAGs 1990-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Groups (N=72)</th>
<th>Groups that use Women (N=49)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women Absent</td>
<td>Women Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Soldiers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Usage</td>
<td>6 (8.33%)</td>
<td>2 (2.77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 50 percent of group</td>
<td>14 (19.44%)</td>
<td>36 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 50 percent of group</td>
<td>3 (4.16%)</td>
<td>11 (15.27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>23 of 72</td>
<td>49 of 72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data on female participation is drawn from Henshaw (2016a) and data on child soldiers comes from Haer and Böhmel (2016a).

23 This ordinal measure accounts for groups that use no child soldiers (0), less than 50 percent of the organization comprised of children (1), or greater than 50 percent of the organization comprised of children (3).
Examining first the degree of child soldiering across the 72 rebel groups, 64 used child soldiers in some capacity with only 8 rebellions refraining from their inclusion (Table 5). Of these groups, approximately 69 percent saw child soldiers used at low levels (less than 50 percent of the group comprised of child soldiers) while slightly more than 19 percent of the groups had many child soldiers (more than 50 percent of the group comprised of children). Although most groups that use child soldiers employ them at lower rates (< 50 percent), certain groups like the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone and Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda were well-known for their use of high numbers of children. When comparing these patterns with Haer and Böhmelt’s (2016a) sample which includes all rebel drawn from the the number of total groups employing children is slightly overrepresented, but the patterns between high and low usage are generally consistent.24 Geographic disbursement of child soldier usage across five regions is reported in Figure 2.

24 Approximately 75 percent of groups in Haer and Böhmelt’s (2016a) sample used child soldiers. Of the 284 conflict-dyad periods captured, 71 saw rebel groups abstain from using child soldiers (25 percent); 161 saw rebel groups employ “some” child soldiers (56.69 percent); and 52 saw rebel groups use many child soldiers (18.31 percent).
Although this investigation is more interested in exploring factors which lead to the inclusion of both women and children or the inclusion of children in the absence of women, a brief examination of groups excluding both yields some interesting insight. In total, only six groups refrained from the inclusion of either women or child soldiers, pointing to the rarity of such occurrences. Four of these six groups were Islamist organizations operating across the Middle East including the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) located in Algeria, Ansar al-Islam in Iraq, the Reformation and Jihad Front in Iraq, and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI/SIIC). Each of these groups promoted authoritarian interpretations of Islamic law with some even adopting strict policies that excluded women from educational and employment opportunities (Mapping Militant Organizations 2016). Thus, the absence of women can, in part, be attributed to the hardline principles of their Islamic ideology.
The remaining two are the Committee for Action for Peace and Democracy in Chad (Comité de Sursaut National pour la Paix et la Démocratie or CSNPD) and the Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance (MFDC). The CSNPD was a participant group in a failed coup attempt in 1992 with the goal of hindering the government’s exploitation of oil in southern Chad (Gould and Winters 2012) while the MFDC was a separatist movement which operated in southern Senegal, and relied solely on adult males.\textsuperscript{25} Taken together, a clear majority of rebellions included women and children in some capacity.

Regarding women’s participation and child soldiering, of the 49 groups identified as having women present, 47 also included child soldiers. The two organizations identified as incorporating women while excluding child soldiers were Devrimci Sol (Revolutionary Left), a Marxist-Leninist organization operating in Turkey, and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), a nationalist movement active in the United Kingdom since the early 1970s. In both groups, women undertook roles in combat and noncombat activities and even occupied leadership positions, illustrating their full incorporation into each respective movement. Interestingly, although quantitative data indicates that the PIRA refrained from child soldiering, anecdotal evidence suggests that children may have been involved with the group in an auxiliary capacity (i.e. smuggling of supplies). Specifically, children were identified as providing an operational advantage to the group as vehicles with children were more successful at passing through checkpoints without scrutiny (Bloom, Gill, and Horgan 2012; Collins 1998). Dev Sol, on the other hand, explicitly refrained from child soldiering because they were viewed as unfit to carry out the group’s terrorist activities, highlighting the debate surrounding children’s efficacy

\textsuperscript{25} New data suggests that the MFDC may have in fact included children within their rebellion.
for conflict (Jo 2015, 160). Rebranding itself Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi (DHKP-C) in the mid 1990s, the group’s aims were to overthrow the Turkish regime. However, as explored in chapter four, the saturation of rebel groups in Turkey and the groups exclusion of children opened avenues for rival organizations like the PKK that were willing to recruit children, to dominant the rebel space.

Still, the PIRA and Dev Sol allude to the potential importance of where insurgents operate. The urban environments in which they existed, provides some insight on the types of groups that will exclude children while including women. Further, both chose to employ terrorist tactics in their campaigns, which possibly points to strategic decisions about the efficacy of children for such operations. However, given the rarity of such groups, the generalizability of such claims is cautious.

A few additional patterns of women’s recruitment are noteworthy. First, of the 47 groups which employed both women and children, only one definitively incorporated women solely as combatants. This suggests that when present, women rarely occupy an exclusive role as a traditional fighter. Further, the one group identified as employing women solely in combat roles, the Islamist organization known as the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, primarily employed them as suicide bombers (Bloom 2012). Second, 20 of these 47 groups employed women only in positions of non-combat (support). According to Henshaw, groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in Uganda and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) in Peru included female participants, but excluded them from combat roles. The ADF enticed women

26 Though Thomas and Wood (2018) only report the presence of female combats, it is not possible to definitively rule out that women may have also taken on other roles.
and children to join with the promise of jobs and money to start small businesses (Scorgie-Porter 2015, 10) while the MRTA, a Marxist-Leninist group, attracted women with their promises to end social inequality (McCormick 1993). Others like the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) and National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) used women as prostitutes in fund raising efforts and, at times, even strategically for the purposes of kidnapping and assassination schemes (Henshaw 2016a; Thomas 2018, 509). These cases also highlight differences in the mechanism of rebel recruitment as the ADF, ATTF, and NLFT each engaged in forcible recruitment while the MRTA largely refrained from this strategy. Thus, women may often be coerced into organizations even when the roles they occupy are likely confined to positions outside those of a traditional combatant. Third, the remaining 26 groups which used both child soldiers and women employed women as both combatants and in non-combat roles. Such organizations included Fatah in Israel, the PKK in Turkey, the RUF in Sierra Leone, and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the Philippines. Lastly, of the 47 groups employing both women and children, women were observed in leadership roles in at least 36 percent of cases (17 groups). In general, these patterns suggest that rarely are women used solely as combatants, roughly 40 percent of groups use women exclusively in a non-combat capacity, and over half (~53 percent) do not discriminate in the types of roles women occupy during rebellion. In addition, the variance in rebel groups’ geographic location, ideology, stated goals, and mechanism of recruitment illustrate that a diverse set of actors choose to employ both women and child soldiers.

As Table 5 above demonstrates, in spite of their frequent participation in rebellion, women were excluded in nearly a quarter of the groups that employed child soldiers (17
Eight of these groups can be classified as Islamist organizations and given the consensus in the literature such groups are most likely to exclude women this is not surprising (Lahoud 2014; Davis 2013; Henshaw 2016a, 2016b; Wood and Thomas 2017, 2018). After excluding Islamist groups, over 10 percent of rebellions (n=9) recruited and used child soldiers, but did not incorporate women in any capacity.28

This discussion raises an important point about the effects of group ideology as a contributing factor for women and children’s presence in rebellion. Table 6 reports a breakdown of rebel group by ideology. The patterns indicate that ethnonationalist/religious groups (non-Islamist) are most likely to see both women and children present. These groups are often identified as those most likely to receive and/or rely on popular support/social endowments (Weinstein 2007) and as such, are less selective regarding gender and age in their recruitment practices. The PKK’s inclusion of women and children can largely be attributed to such dynamics, although myriad factors led to the group’s diverse pool of recruits. First, the groups appeal to ethnic Kurds and nationalist goals upon its formation in the late 1970s established its foundation for recruitment across a broad spectrum. A competitive environment which saw the organization pitted against rival Kurdish groups necessitated the incorporation of willing recruits irrespective of age and gender. Groups like Dev Sol, though espousing a similar ideology and facing a similarly competitive marketplace, allowed women to participate, but excluded children based on a strategic decision related to their efficacy for the group’s chosen tactics (terrorism).

27 Table 7 reports a list of these groups.
28 This refers to 9 of the groups in Table 7 or roughly 14 percent of the 64 groups that used child soldiers.
For the PKK, a protracted rebellion and the escalation of Turkey’s violent counterinsurgency practices would see the group reduce remaining barriers to entry, recruiting children and women at higher levels.\(^ {29} \) While the development of “a discourse of gender emancipation” can help explain the presence of women (Tezcür 2019), ideology alone does not really explain the inclusion of children. In short, a coalescence of factors generated both the desire and need to include women and children in addition to adult males.\(^ {30} \)

**Table 6. Rebel Composition by Ideology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideology</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>CS no Women</th>
<th>CS and Women</th>
<th>Women only</th>
<th>No CS or Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redistributive ideology</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-women’s rights ideology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnoreligious Islamist</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnoreligious Non-Islamist</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^ {29} \) An in-depth exploration of the factors which contributed to the PKK’s recruitment patterns can be found in chapter four.

\(^ {30} \) Table 6 also uncovers that leftist/redistributive insurgents were likely to see both women and children recruits. Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood (2014), for instance, note that leftist insurgencies such as the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (UNRG) were reliant, almost exclusively, on popular support for organizational longevity and recruited both women and children. The Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF), a Marxist group, specifically split from its predecessor, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), as it wanted to “drastically alter society” (Thomas and Bond 2015, 501) and saw women’s roles as imperative for this outcome (Bernal 2000). The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), a Marxist-Leninist insurgency, were highly dependent upon local populations for support and cooperation (Mazurana 2013, 155).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideology</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>CS no Women</th>
<th>CS and Women</th>
<th>Women only</th>
<th>No CS or Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other (unclear)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Rebel movements can be classified under more than one ideological category

**Patterns Across Groups Employing Children Exclusively**

To this point, this paper has examined the patterns that help to explain why groups might prefer women and children, or at least see both present. But, why might groups as diverse as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in Yugoslavia, the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (MDJT), the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) in Papua New Guinea each choose to include child soldiers while excluding women in any capacity? Generally, these groups have few similarities except for their patterns of recruitment. The typology presented in Figure 3 suggests that these groups generally espouse more conservative ideologies, diminishing the likelihood of women’s participation. Further, their inclusion of children illustrates they are less likely to be compliant with international norms against child soldiering. Their exclusion of women can possibly be a signal of an even more egregious violation of and apathy towards international, and specifically, western standards.\(^{31}\)

More importantly, the child soldier literature would indicate that something about children made them more desirable than women for these groups and/or women were not viewed

\(^{31}\) Of course, this assumes that the inclusion of women sees them occupy positions in the organization, not merely in roles as combat wives, camp followers, sexual slaves, etc. Given that Henshaw’s (2016a) coding requires their incorporation in roles outside of these classifications, this assumption likely has some validity (although these roles are not mutually exclusive).
as viable options for membership. Eck (2014, 372), for instance, notes that recruitment strategies often involve some cost to a rebel group so rebels must make calculations about how they recruit. Although her analysis focuses on conditions leading to the adoption of coercive recruitment practices, I suggest that a similar logic is applicable when considering who rebels are willing to recruit. In other words, rebel groups’ exclusion of women and inclusion of children is, in part, a strategic calculation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Norms</th>
<th>Compliance</th>
<th>Violation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No women or child soldiers</td>
<td>Women soldiers and no children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child soldiers no women</td>
<td>Both women and child soldiers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.** Expectations

These decisions on which actors to include and exclude becomes an exercise in cost-benefit analysis and are impacted at the intersection of internal group dynamics and external societal conditions that promote the continuation of gender inequality. Generally, all actors should inherently benefit from a larger pool of recruits which can augment the group’s size and increase its capacity to compete with the opposition (government). However, it is evident that not all organizations choose to adopt such an unrestrictive recruitment strategy. Given the patterns
identified, more groups appear willing to violate norms against child soldiering than are willing to include women.

First, internal group dynamics can constrain the recruitment of women as their inclusion may jeopardize existing societal relations and result in internal backlash. Male members in particular may challenge the integration of women and reject their participation in the group based on these pre-existing norms. This is especially likely in more conservative societies and in ideologically conservative groups where the inclusion of women could inadvertently lead to women’s increased demands for liberation and empowerment both during and after conflict. Mazurana (2013, 163) even notes that for some rebel groups, “the masculinist identity of its male fighters is so central to the group that it cannot withstand the presence of females on any equal level.” Even those groups that espouse redistributive and ethno-nationalist ideologies must consider the potential for backlash from its membership and supporters and may actively work to ensure that women are not genuinely empowered. Although not excluding women entirely, the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) believed the presence of women in combat roles would undermine the ‘machista’ of the group and threaten the power of men in the organization (Schmidt 2007; Mazurana 2013, 166). Even if rhetorically promoting the elimination of gender inequality, rebels may avoid recruitment of women to avoid patriarchal backlash. For example, although far from achieving true societal gender equality, the PKK’s inclusion of women was the result of strategic decisions by leadership through a series of compromises which specifically considered how the conservative Kurdish society would perceive female combatants. Their inclusion ultimately led to a gradual liberalization of society in which women were able to occupy more positions and spaces in public life that were originally unachievable (Tezcür 2019). For groups that want to avoid this potential outcome, the exclusion of women might become an
important consideration in their recruitment decisions to ensure patriarchal norms are not eroded.32

Secondly, the traditional hierarchical norm that women’s roles in society should primarily be dedicated to domestic work (i.e. childbearing and caregiving), can inhibit their inclusion in rebellion and the roles they may take on even if participating (Thomas and Wood 2018, 217-218). As the PKK discussion suggests, rebel groups are often “savvy” about the societies within which they operate within and the communities from which they seek support(Mazurana 2013, 154). This can include their attentiveness to gender divisions within society and these societal norms both directly and inadvertently subjugate women to positions that limit their opportunities for advancement and empowerment. According to Thomas and Wood (2018, 224) high fertility rates “reflects lower societal gender equality” which contributes to societal perceptions of women’s roles. Similarly, limited female participation in the labor force and/or lack of educational opportunities for women have been shown to constrain women’s participation in rebellion during times of conflict (Caprioli 2005; Thomas and Wood 2018). Schaftenaar (2017, 765-766), for instance, suggests that these gender norms can essentially limit broader mobilization into rebellion, especially in states where women face legal or social restrictions on access to public spaces without male accompaniment. This underscores how societal gender barriers can erode opportunities for participation even if women wish to join or groups wish to recruit.

32 Mazurana’s (2013) discussion of the AUC points to the plausibility of such an argument. The case of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) discussed later in this chapter also alludes to this point.
An alternative perspective suggests that under such conditions (i.e. when women are excluded from certain sectors of society), lower class women would be more likely to join rebellions given their diminished opportunities in society in comparison to well-educated, upper-class women. The cost of joining rebel movements for these women is comparatively low and membership in rebel groups may often be seen as an opportunity to vacate positions of domestic confinement and a means to alter their future prospects increasing the likelihood of their involvement (Henshaw 2016b; Tezcür 2019). However, such a perspective also assumes that rebel groups will openly welcome women into an organization. While this is undoubtedly true for certain rebellions, not all are willing to remove gendered barriers to entry, especially those groups operating in a rural setting that, more often than not, are associated with conservative viewpoints.

For these groups, I suggest that children can fill an important void with limited cost. It is largely recognized that children are cheaper in terms of cost and control (Beber and Blattman 2013). They do not require the pecuniary benefits that adults may demand during conflict and can be more easily manipulated and indoctrinated in comparison to adults. Further, rural communities are often categorized not only by strong patriarchal relations where women marry at a younger age and give birth to more children. They also tend to be associated with higher levels of poverty and lower levels of education. In these settings, children are typically engaged in a variety of adult economic activities (Andvig and Gates 2010). Analyzing child labor rates in the 1990s across Peru, Nepal, and Zimbabwe, for instance, Ersado (2004) discovered that children in rural areas showed lower rates of school attendance and higher rates of employment compared to children in urban areas. Thus, children in rural areas might then be equated as viable recruits for rural insurgents. Given their involvement in the adult economy, they can provide
bodies to fill the rank-and-file yet are unlikely to detract from the payoffs available to senior officials within the group, both during and after conflict. While women, all else equal, can meet similar criteria, their inclusion can increase the risk of patriarchal backlash from the membership.

Clearly, many groups appear willing to include children given the opportunity to do so and can overcome the participation constraint by using child soldiers (Gates 2017). More specifically, children can be viewed as a lower threat to those groups that, while potentially propagating the need for societal change rhetorically, may want to mitigate the risk of openly challenging societal gender norms. Here, the maintenance of the patriarchy ensures men continue to benefit during conflict and in the post-conflict environment. As Mazurana (2013) notes, male members may be more skeptical, threatened, or vehement about the participation of women than they are about the inclusion of children.

Table 7 reports the full list of groups that included child soldiers in the absence of women. The list shows that a diverse set of non-state armed groups were willing to recruit children and decided that women should not be afforded opportunities to participate (and/or women were not willing to join). Over one-third of these groups were Islamist organizations. Consistent with previous literature, such organizations are unlikely to see women present given their ideological foundations which promote maintenance of patriarchal relations often based on religious doctrine (Henshaw 2016a; Wood and Thomas 2017). Children, however, become viable options for these groups. As Table 6 illustrated, nearly 80 percent of those groups identified as Islamist organizations included child soldiers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name</th>
<th>Founded</th>
<th>Years Active</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Ideology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khmer People's National Liberation Front</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1990-1991</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Redistributive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1999-2002</td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union of Forces for Democracy and Development</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rally for Congolese Democracy-ML</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1999-2001</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>1993-1998</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Islamist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Democratic Front of Bodoland</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1993-2004</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Ethno- Nationalist (non-Islamist) &amp; Redistributive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Courts Union</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2006-2008</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>Islamist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Name</td>
<td>Founded</td>
<td>Years Active</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sudan Liberation Movement/Army</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2003-2006, 2008</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Ethno-Nationalist (non-Islamist)</td>
</tr>
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*Data on women’s participation and years of group activity is drawn from Henshaw (2016a) and reconciled with data from Thomas and Wood (2018). Data on child soldiers comes from Haer and Böhmelt (2016a).*

Three factors have been identified as likely contributors to rebels’ exclusion of women in spite of their inclusion of children: a) the risk of patriarchal backlash form its internal membership; b) pre-conflict societal gender norms that create barriers for women’s mobilization; and c) rural settings which are often more conservative. To examine the plausibility of these three explanations/contributors I use brief illustrative case studies which allow me to more fully consider how each factor can effect rebels’ recruitment. I adopt a most different case method for my case selection strategy (Seawright and Gerring 2008). Inherently, the small sample from which I am able to select limits my choices in case selection strategy so there are some constraints.\(^{33}\) The most different strategy requires the researcher to identify cases in which only the main independent variable of interest and the dependent variable covary, with all other plausible independent (or a majority) variables are different (Seawright and Gerring 2008, 306). With this in mind, I chose two groups: the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad

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\(^{33}\) As such, the selected cases might also be classified as cases of convenience.
(MDJT) and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Although significantly different in terms of group goals and geographic location, both originated and operated primarily in rural settings and in patriarchal environments that saw high levels of gender inequality, and both included child soldiers while excluding women.

The Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (MDJT)

The MDJT launched its campaign to overthrow the Déby government in 1998 (US Department of State 2001). Led by Youssouf Togoïmi who had previously served as President Déby’s Minister of Defense, the MDJT insurgency arose largely due to questions of electoral fraud in the 1996 presidential and 1997 legislative elections (US Department of State 1998). Early in its rebellion, the group was suspected of benefiting from Libyan support which helped the group carry out successful campaigns through 1999. However, the MDJT never seriously challenged the regime (Africa Confidential 2001; ICG 2006). Togoïmi’s death in 2002 led to the organization’s fracture and, after multiple failed ceasefire agreements, a peace agreement was formally signed in late 2003 although certain factions within the MDJT refused to comply (Amnesty International 2003). Although a relatively short-lived insurgency, no clear evidence suggests that the group incorporated women, but reports point to a “number of child soldiers within its ranks” (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2004).

The case of the MDJT in Chad highlights not only the importance of considering pre-war gender norms in explaining the reported absence of women, but it can also help in understanding why children were present. Looking at those indicators identified by Thomas and Wood (2018) as relevant to female participation in non-state armed groups, at the start of the rebellion (1998/1999), Chad’s female fertility rate sat at approximately 7.38, the percentage of total
females in the labor force was reported at over 40 percent, and the secondary education ratio of girls to boys was roughly 25 percent (World Bank 2019). In other words, women on average gave birth to over 7 children, comprised less than half the workforce, and only about one-quarter of girls were granted access to secondary education. Lacking access to education and employment, and given the high birth rate, one might expect women to be more likely to join rebellion as a means out of patriarchy. This was indeed the case for groups like the PKK where women saw participation in the organization as a pathway out of patriarchal relations (Tezcür 2019). However, for the MDJT, women were excluded in the insurgency.

These societal factors might also help account for the group’s inclusion of child soldiers. For the MDJT, their goal targeting regime overthrow did not harness significant popular mobilization and its ideological foundations suggested no genuine attempt to appeal to a broader coalition in society. Further, the MDJT, although attempting to mobilize support along ethnic lines, appeared to be a relatively small organization, at its peak never amounting to more than 2,000 members with some estimates suggesting it was actually much smaller (OECD 2002). In an interview with Jeune Afrique, Togoïmi rejected the idea that the MDJT rebellion was solely an ethnic struggle claiming, “I can even give you the names of several officers who are not Toubous (Togoïmi’s ethnic group) .... All these men have joined us for one and only one reason: they do not accept injustice” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2000). By most accounts, Togoïmi’s attempt to overthrow the regime appeared to be an attempt to unseat a government that had taken a “dictatorial drift” under Déby’s leadership (Agence France Press 2002).

The rural nature of the insurgency offers an additional perspective on its inclusion of children and absence of women. Togoïmi, an ethnic Toubou, operated in the Tibesti Mountains,
a vastly rural region in which inhabitants are largely herders. In 2000, the Understanding Children’s Work (UCW) project, a collaboration between the International Labor Organization (ILO), UNICEF, and the World Bank, noted that over 55 percent of children ages 5-14 were involved in the labor force of which upwards of 60 percent lived in a rural environment (UCW 2019). Well over half of these children were boys suggesting their systematic involvement in adult economic activities during the midst of the MDJT’s insurgency. The regularity with which young boys were already entwined in the labor force, particularly in rural areas, suggests that they were viable recruits for the MDJT.

Three inductive insights also arise when examining the Chad/MDJT conflict. First, historical reports indicated that the Chadian government was engaged in the forcible recruitment of children, largely from the Zaghawa ethnic group, the same ethnic group of President Déby (Child Soldiers International 2001a). The government’s direct incorporation of children during this time, often through coercive practices with some children as young as 12, speak to the normalcy of such practices in Chad during this time (Child Soldiers International 2001a). For instance, evidence suggested that parents were required to either provide one of their children to the army or pay some monetary fee. For the MDJT, an organization that included a number of former members of the Chadian National Armed Forces (ANT), the inclusion of children may have been viewed as typical practice. Even before the conflict started, children were regularly incorporated into the ANT. As a result, with the clear lack of delineation in the age of a soldier, even within the national army, it is not surprising that the MDJT included them in their campaign. Interestingly though, there was no evidence to suggest that the MDJT engaged in forcible recruitment (Haer et al. 2019).
Second, scholars have suggested that reciprocal child recruitment practices are commonplace. When adversaries employ child soldiers it increases the likelihood that all actors in conflict will engage in the practice as a means of survival and of tactical innovation (Tynes and Early 2015; Tynes 2018). Déby’s violent recruitment tactics that directly targeted children may have increased the willingness of the MDJT to recruit children who would have potentially been recruited by the government. Third, the Chadian government adopted an extreme counterinsurgency campaign against the MDJT and these scorched earth policies marked by the indiscriminate nature of government violence in the Tibesti region could have contributed to the incorporation of children, a point to which I return in chapter four. However, one should expect that such policies would increase the likelihood that women would be recruited into the organization. The exclusion of women in the MDJT under such conditions suggests a particular reason for their exclusion, pointing to the plausibility of arguments about societal gendered barriers to entry.34

Overall, the case of the MDJT underscores the complexities of rebel recruitment. Societal gender norms both pre-conflict and during the conflict suggest extreme levels of inequality that diminished the viability of female participation. This is reinforced by the rural nature of the insurgency. Though no definitive evidence was identified to suggest that children were included because of concerns over patriarchal backlash, it appears that children were a more viable option because of their roles in society (particularly in the rural setting). Lastly, the inductive insights in this case suggest that child soldiering was a common practice within the ANT and was carried over by members of the MDJT once launching their insurgency. This emphasizes the normalcy

34 Interestingly, no other Chadian rebel organization in the sample explored in this project included women
of child soldiering in certain societies while also illustrating the reciprocal nature of child recruitment amongst belligerents.

*The Kosovo Liberation Army*

The case of the KLA provides a second illustration of how societal factors and internal group dynamics might contribute to variation in group composition. The KLA was a nationalist insurgency comprised chiefly of ethnic Albanians that fought for independence from Yugoslavia in the late 1990s. The group officially formed in December 1993, but operated largely in the shadows until 1996 when it launched a series of coordinated attacks against Serbian forces. By 1998 the KLA had gained control of up to 40 percent of the Kosovo territory (Mulaj 2008). In 1999, after a series of failed negotiations, NATO bombing efforts eventually forced Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević to agree to an end to the conflict.

By traditional metrics, the case of the KLA seems to be somewhat of a deviation from the general societal patterns one might expect in a group that excludes women. Low fertility rates (2.75) and a high female secondary education ratio (~ 103.5) suggests that the group, all things equal, should have been more likely to include women in their movement (World Development Indicators 2019). However, as in the Chadian case above, women were quite active in the labor force at the group’s start in 1996 (~ 42 percent). Nevertheless, Henshaw’s (2016a) evaluation shows no women were present in the group’s campaign for autonomy and independence.35 Although a nationalist movement, the KLA was largely identified as an outlet for men to perform

35 Some accounts suggest women did join the KLA, although the degree of their incorporation within the movement is less clear (see Özerdem 2003a). Others have pointed to women’s involvement in Kosovo in mine-clearing operations and question the degree of true ‘incorporation’ (Corrin 2000).
their ‘patriotic’ duty and if men of fighting age attempted to defy what was largely viewed as their civic responsibility, they were ostracized by society and even family members (Munn 2008). An individual who fled the conflict stated, “my mother was unhappy with my decision to run and not fight with my brother and father in the KLA,” leading to their estrangement (Munn 2008, 446). Another account suggests that a mother committed suicide after learning her son deserted the KLA as she could “not live with the disgrace of knowing her son was a coward” (Munn 2008, 446). In fact, many women encouraged the men in their families to participate with the KLA.

Despite the fact that traditional indicators would suggest the KLA operated in an environment that, although appearing less patriarchal in relative terms, the Kosovar Albanian community was patriarchal in other ways. This implies the need for a more expansive investigation of societal gender inequality. For the KLA, while women were seen as important to the nationalist movement, their participation as soldiers was not viewed as vital to the viability of the rebellion. In fact, leaders within the KLA “exhibited little desire to give up any of the privileges of patriarchy” (Enloe 2000, 151), and showed resistance to the empowerment of women in roles outside of their perceived places in society (Munn 2008, 451). For example, the KLA largely saw women as “childbearing…icons of national survival” that would better serve the group from a distance (Munn 2008, 440). This suggests that there were legitimate concerns of patriarchal backlash within the KLA as the dominant perspective in Kosovar society promoted traditional patriarchal roles. In addition, the masculine perceptions of war, which suggested men were those fit for conflict, assists in explaining women’s absence in the KLA.

Although excluding women, the KLA benefited significantly from popular support. Still, during the height of conflict the group chose to require all men of fighting age (18 to 50) to join
the movement (Child Soldiers International 2001b). Children under 18 were often absorbed in this process. The majority of these children were between the ages of 16 and 17 and were seen as useful resources by the KLA in comparison to adult women with many young teens fighting with the group (Singer 2005b). Although precise information on the number of children used by the KLA is difficult to obtain, estimates suggest that at its peak, up to 10 percent of the over 16,000 fighters in the KLA were under the age of 18. Some accounts even point to the presence of girls who were identified as primarily taking on roles as cooks for soldiers (Child Soldiers International 2001b). Others point to their participation in actual conflict (Mazurana and McKay 2001). Regardless, the inclusion of those under 18 fits within the notion of societal gender norms which saw women subjugated to positions outside of the group—and even if in the group—subjugated to domestic work rather than actual fighting. Boys over the age 16 appear to have been majority of child soldiers within the group which points to their perception in society as those responsible for fulfilling the role of a soldier and illustrate how children can fill a void when groups choose to exclude women participants. In addition, the strength of the KLA originally resided in its success in rural areas where it was able to mobilize organization support (Perritt 2008, 51). Serbian onslaughts eventually led to growing KLA support in urban centers (Kifner 1999), but the organization’s roots in rural Kosovo, where patriarchal conditions were strongest, contributed to the absence of women in the group and inclusion of teenage boys.

At least one additional inductive insight arises from the KLA investigation and concerns the nature of sexual violence employed by Bosnian Serbs in the conflict. The conflict in Kosovo

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36 Less than 2 percent were reportedly below the age of 16.
37 This highlights an important, albeit overlooked distinction in the child soldier literature—the variation in the experiences of girls and boys.
was particularly brutal and included a vast array of human rights violations. One in particular was the regularity of sexual violence. Serbian tactics, for instance, included widespread rape (Özerdem 2003b) which was largely identified as an effort at ethnic cleansing. Consequently, the inclusion of women in the KLA could be seen as an organizational vulnerability. Women were prime targets for sexual violence by opposition forces and given the KLA’s perception of women as “childbearing…icons of national survival,” this may have further deterred the group’s willingness to incorporate women.

As with the case of the MDJT, the KLA’s organizational composition clearly illustrates the complexities of rebel recruitment and exclusion. Though societal gender norms appeared to be less discriminatory towards women, a strong patriarchal structure was apparent in other ways within Kosovo society. In addition, concerns over patriarchal backlash amongst KLA membership and the group’s rural foundations contributed to the exclusion of women with the acceptance of child recruits. The masculine perceptions of war, the sense of national duty espoused by Kosovar Albanians, and the requirement that all men age 18-50 participate increased the chances that boys under 18 would be included. However, as discussed, the vast majority of child soldiers were at least 16 years of age. Overall, this case accentuates the need for scholarship to continue to explore the factors and conditions which can influence group composition.

Conclusions

Despite the growing body of literature that has investigated women’s participation across non-state armed groups, scholars had yet to investigate why some rebel groups diversify their recruitment patterns to be more inclusive of a wider spectrum of demographics while others...
recruitment is more constricted. This paper offers such an attempt, exploring probable conditions that lead groups to recruit child soldiers, women soldiers, both, or neither. This investigation demonstrates the need for a more comprehensive understanding of rebel composition and emphasizing the intricacies of rebels’ recruitment of children and women members. The patterns identified suggest that women are rarely active in rebel movements in the absence of children, but at least 10 percent of rebellions may see child soldiers present when women are excluded. This is an interesting discovery. For those groups which included both populations, the majority were classified as ethnonationalist organizations which are most likely to benefit from social endowments. In addition, some preliminary evidence suggests that the inclusion of women can help groups that use child soldiers mitigate reputational consequences. In those cases where children were used, but women excluded, the theoretical insights revealed societal gender inequalities such as high fertility rates and limited access to education/employment can hinder women’s participation. These conditions can lead groups to pursue child soldiers who are unlikely to exacerbate concerns of patriarchal backlash. Children can, in short, offer groups an opportunity to fill vacancies without igniting internal backlash from members who see value in the preservation of the patriarchy. Further, the case illustrations demonstrate how rural insurgencies may target children before women as these groups must overcome gender barriers that are often stronger in rural communities whereas their urban counterparts may find layers of the patriarchy already being peeled back. Future work would do well to more fully consider these complex interactions within rebel membership in spite of the challenges in clearly identifying rebels’ internal motivations.

The current investigation only speaks to the general presence or absence of women and children within rebel groups, thereby neglecting to consider their respective roles within an
insurgency. For those groups that include both participants, it would be interesting to consider how women and children’s roles might vary across specific rebel groups. Future comparative perspectives can explore these internal dynamics as women’s roles as noncombatants might mean they are subjugated to positions as combat wives or are used in more strategically important positions such as intelligence gathering, fundraising, and so on. Of course, these roles might not be mutually exclusive, but a more holistic understanding of their employment in rebellion will undoubtedly be fruitful. This same principle applies to the literature on child soldiering as operational definitions cast a wide net and do little to distinguish their roles in rebellion. For instance, it would be interesting to see if groups that employ women in more traditional military roles are more likely to keep children away from the front line, or vice versa. Understanding these details can be crucial for the policy community as it aims to deploy the correct resources in post-conflict settings.
References


95


CHAPTER FOUR: INNOCENCE TO VIOLENCE: INVESTIGATING THE CASE OF CHILD SOLDIERS IN THE PKK

Abstract

When and why do violent non-state actors use child soldiers? Using case study evidence and new data on deceased PKK fighters, I show that the employment of those under the age of 18 has been a regular occurrence in the PKK since its onset. I suggest that the inclusion of child soldiers can be explained largely by inter-organizational rivalries which necessitated wide recruitment practices and in part by the organization’s goals, ideological foundations, and ethnic nationalism which appealed to many young people. Further, I argue that once a group begins recruiting children, it is unlikely to stop doing so. I also explore patterns of recruitment throughout the duration of the PKK’s struggle and illustrate how after launching its insurgency against the Turkish government, the organization’s recruitment of children began to increase first, in the ratio of children to adults and later in the actual numbers of child soldiers. Extending theoretical arguments which suggest that government’s level of violence against civilians and rational rebel responses, I show that the PKK appeared to become less selective in its recruitment patterns at the height of its insurgency against the Turkish government (1990-1999). Lastly, I explore the patterns of recruitment after its leader’s capture in 1999 and show that the recruitment of children continued even during less hostile periods of time with some evidence suggesting that the group’s use of children as direct combatants has significantly decreased. I qualify this conclusion by showing how the PKK’s rate of reporting recruits’ ages has dramatically declined in recent periods suggesting that the group recognizes the importance of concealing its negative recruitment practices for international legitimacy.
Introduction

The success of Kurdish militants in the fight against ISIS has ushered in renewed attention to the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK) and its Syrian affiliate, the Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat (PYD). While much of the recent attention has highlighted the success of these groups against the Islamic State (Solomon and Dombey 2014), reports as recent as 2018 continue to condemn both groups for their recruitment and use of child soldiers (HRW 2018a). Understanding why non-state armed groups like the PKK use child soldiers remains a complex task. Extant scholarship on rebel child soldiering has identified several explanations about the practice at a cross-organizational level. Yet, missing in the literature are studies which examine the dynamic nature of rebels’ recruitment. First, few studies have engaged with the question of when rebel groups first recruit child soldiers and why they might do so? Second, though academic investigations have largely explored the presence/absence of children at some point during a group’s rebellion, we still lack a clear understanding of factors that impact their patterns of child recruitment over time. This paper engages with both questions, fitting into the broader literature concerning rebel groups’ incentives for civilian victimization, focusing exclusively on their recruitment and use of those under the age of 18 as combatants. In doing so, it highlights the complexities that often surround insurgents’ child recruitment practices and, more specifically, discusses the factors and incentives that drive groups to employ children as soldiers in conflict despite international condemnation.

This is not the first time that scholars have recognized the importance of within case investigations in elucidating patterns of rebel behavior. Still, micro-level analyses of the “mechanisms responsible for changes in actors’ tactics…remain poorly understood” across academic studies (Wood 2014). Specifically, though large-N studies on child soldiering have
provided important insights on those factors and conditions that might contribute to the recruitment of children by non-state actors, they are not always helpful in specifying causal mechanisms that first lead to the practice let alone in explaining fluctuations in the rate of child recruitment. In the case of the PKK, a dynamic set of factors have contributed both to the group’s initial use of child soldiers dating back to its formation in 1984 and the subsequent variation in their recruitment of children.

From here, the paper proceeds in several parts. First, I briefly discuss the extant literature on child soldiering, highlighting theoretical and empirical foundations used to explain why rebels choose to use child soldiers. Second, I lay out a number of theoretical arguments which can help explain the PKK’s use of child soldiers. I suggest that the PKK’s initial employment of child soldiers can largely be explained by the competitiveness of the rebel marketplace within which the organization emerged. Coupled with the lack of domestic and international norms against the practice at its formation, I emphasize how the PKK first became involved in the recruitment of children. Next, I argue that once an organization begins to include children, there are few reasons it will abandon the practice, but periods of intense conflict can increase the rate of child recruitment. To explain variation in the levels of recruitment across time periods, I unpack two broad theoretical arguments. I borrow from theories of rebel violence at the nexus between rebel-civilian bargaining (Wood 2014) and the importance of international signaling and perception for rebel legitimacy (Lasley and Thyne 2015). These theories assist in explaining why the PKK continued to employ child soldiers at relatively high rates during times of intense conflict, how this shifted in times of relative peace, and why it ultimately decided to sign on to a commitment to stop using those under the age of 18 as fighters in 2013. Specifically, I illustrate that changing norms in the post-1999 era likely contributed to a shift in the way the organization used children
and ultimately in how it recorded demographic information on recruits. In section three, I offer general background information on the PKK insurgency in Turkey before proceeding with an in-depth investigation of the PKK’s patterns of recruitment from its formation through 2016. In addition to the qualitative evidence, I use the Kurdish Insurgency Militants dataset (KIM) which affords the opportunity to explore individual level demographic data on deceased PKK fighters between 1984 and 2016 (Tezcür, 2016). The paper concludes with a discussion of key findings, avenues for future research, and practical implications.

**Review of the Literature**

Despite international condemnation and nearly a dozen UN resolutions aimed to curtail the practice, both rebels and governments alike have continued to employ children in their armies. Recent empirical assessments point to upwards of 80 percent of all rebellions active in the post-Cold War era as having used child soldiers (Haer and Böhmelt 2016a). Given the frequency of the practice, scholars have devoted increasing attention in recent to identifying the determinants of child recruitment by non-state actors. Generally, these studies can be distinguished according to theoretical approach. First are supply-side approaches which largely concern the systemic factors that have contributed to child soldiering during periods of conflict. In other words, these arguments often contend that societal/structural factors can increase the likelihood of children joining insurgencies and often address the question of child soldiering through an opportunity structure lens (Lasley and Thyne 2015). For instance, scholars have argued that globalization has resulted in an increase in global inequality which has eroded societal norms surrounding the protection of children (Honwana 2011). Others posit that children might find membership within rebellion to be financially preferable to their status quo or safer than remaining outside of a
group. For instance, children may join rebellions when opportunities for employment and education are low (Cohn and Goodwin-Gill 1994; Wessells 2006; Tynes 2011). Soldiering, thus, is a potential path out of poverty. Additionally, in instances where vulnerable populations exist, such as in states where there are high numbers of internally displaced persons or refugees, children can become a readily available resource for insurgents (Achvarina and Reich 2006). These locations may lack the security, both physical and social, to keep rebel groups from recruiting children and can even push children to seek refuge in rebellion. Generally, these explanations provide useful starting points for the conditions that might push children to rebel organizations, but they only focus on one side of the equation.

The other side of the equation can be found in demand-side explanations which seek to identify the characteristics unique to children that incentivize rebel groups to recruit them for their insurgencies. Framed as an exercise in cost-benefit analysis during times of conflict, earlier work suggested that children were simply a means to an end in instances where rebels needed bodies to continue rebellion or meet quotas (Woods 1993). This, scholars suggest, is especially likely in prolonged and bloody conflicts which can constrain rebel (and government) resources, human and material, resulting in the adoption of practices that might otherwise be avoided (Machel 1996; Tynes and Early 2015). The modernization of weaponry and the prevalence of small arms which are easier to operate and lighter to carry, have also been identified as factors making children more useful to rebel groups (Singer 2006). However, though plausible, the validity of such arguments assumes that children are effective as soldiers and ignores the fact that many light and easy to operate weapons have been around for long periods of time (Andvig
and Gates 2010; Beber and Blattman 2013). Nonetheless, Haer and Böhmelt (2016a) suggest that rebel groups who employ child soldiers might do so because of their military effectiveness. Specifically arguing that the malleability of children, their ease of indoctrination and loyalty, their lack of risk assessment, and the fact that even if they are not directly engaged in combat operations, the logistical support they provide can sway the power asymmetry, they find that rebels with child soldiers are “more likely to be associated with higher fighting capacities of rebel groups” (Haer and Böhmelt 2016a, 167). Other scholars have also argued that children are more easily coerced, manipulated, and indoctrinated than their adult counterparts and are more loyal and committed to the group’s cause (Blattman and Annan 2008; Gates and Reich 2010: Beber and Blattman 2013).

Extending demand-side explanations, scholars have also underscored the importance of organizational goals in identifying which rebellions are likely to exclude or include children (Lasley and Thyne 2015; Jo 2015). First, debate exists over the effect of secessionist goals on recruitment decisions. Lasley and Thyne (2015) argue that those organizations with ambitions of secession should be less likely to use child soldiers out of a need for international legitimacy to achieve their ultimate ambition of statehood (Lasley and Thyne 2015). However, Jo (2015) argues that separatist organizations are far more reliant on local support, often mobilized along ethnic and nationalist lines, and consequently are more inclusive in their recruitment practices. As such, they are more likely to have children in their rank and file. Though these studies

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38 Further, weapons like the Ak-47 have been in production since 1949 and weigh just over six pounds suggesting that children would have been desirable in previous time periods.
employ different samples, both emphasize the importance of considering organizational goals and ambitions in explaining variation in child recruitment.

Lastly, recent work speaks to the importance of rebels’ pursuit and exploitation of natural resources in explaining their demand for children (Beber and Blattman 2013; Haer et al. 2019; Faulkner et al. 2019). Though few rebellions can be thought of as solely existing for the purpose of profiteering, those groups operating in environments ripe with valuable natural resources may see children as useful tools in their pursuit to exploit them. Further, for those groups that are successfully able to exploit the illicit economy, children can serve functional roles in the acquisition or distribution of a resource which becomes especially likely for those groups that exploit lootable resources such as alluvial diamonds.

Overall, the majority of recent scholarship has failed to disentangle the complexities and myriad factors that likely work in unison and contribute to a group’s adoption and continuation in recruiting children. For instance, quantitative academic studies assume (often due to data limitations) that child recruitment is constant throughout conflict. Largely a consequence of data limitations, child soldiering has only been captured as a binary indicator and ordinal measure used to estimate the prevalence of child recruits within rebel ranks (Haer and Böhmel 2016a). Relatedly, scholars have struggled to identify when rebel groups are likely to first begin recruiting children and what conditions may increase the likelihood that they abandon the practice. Specifically, demand-side explanations generally treat armed groups as unitary actors with a fixed set of interests and supply-side arguments often fail to acknowledge the consistency of societal conditions across conflict areas and do not consider rebels’ calculations in the process. This paper builds on the literature to evaluate how the environments under which rebel groups operate affect their levels of civilian victimization (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006;
Weinstein, 2006; Salehyan et al. 2014; Wood, 2014). However, diverging from past scholarship which disproportionately reflects on the factors contributing to rebels’ employment of lethal violence, I examine how the pre-, during, and post-conflict environments can impact rebels’ recruitment of child soldiers.

**Theoretical Considerations**

Though current literature offers a number of compelling insights into the reasons why an organization like the PKK may choose to use child soldiers, no singular theory can fully account for variations over time in the group’s employment of child combatants. Thus, a theoretical framework to explain the organization’s decision to recruit children, particularly prior to the start of conflict, must consider a number of factors identified as relevant in the child recruitment literature. I develop three broad theoretical umbrellas which help to explain recruitment throughout the PKK’s insurgency. First, to better understand an organization’s initial decision to recruit children, it is imperative to consider the environment in which the group emerges in addition to its goals and ideological roots. Second, to explain variations in child recruitment throughout conflict, one must take into account not only organizational behavior in a previous time period but also consider the series of dynamic factors that can shift organizational demands for new recruits. Specifically, an increase in rebels’ demand for new recruits given the intensity of warfare can lower the barriers to entry into an organization leading to an increase, not only in the number of members across a population, but also in the number of child soldiers within the ranks. At the same time, periods marked by lower hostilities may decrease the rate of general recruitment, and in turn, child recruitment. Third, I suggest that changing international norms and changes in conflict dynamics can alter a group’s apparent commitment to addressing issues
related to child soldering, and as such, can influence their behavior. Specifically, I suggest that the PKK in more recent times has an incentive to forgo child recruitment practices as it seeks some degree of international legitimacy. In short, the negative press and criticism surrounding rebels’ recruitment practices can influence and possibly even constrain rebels’ behavior.

Insurgent popular mobilization, even for the most noble of causes, can be a challenge (Moore 1995). A lengthy scholarly debate exists related to who joins rebellion and why (e.g. Gates 2002; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Weinstein 2006; Tezcür 2018), but few scholars explicitly investigate the variation in the age of recruits. Relatedly, a debate exist within the literature on rebel child recruitment related to the effect of goals. For secessionist movements in particular, appearing legitimate and norm-abiding might be critical for goal attainment, decreasing the likelihood they will recruit children (Lasley and Thyne 2015). However, as Jo (2015) illustrates, these groups are also more likely to seek out and benefit from local support. This availability and reliance on local support can, in turn, increase the likelihood that a group incorporates child solders.\(^{39}\) Still, the mechanism here generally speaks to the importance of a group’s ideological foundations as critical determinants of child recruitment. As such, groups that mobilize around ethnic and nationalist goals are often more reliant on popular support than those that otherwise may lack such a unifying principle. In this context, and particularly during the formation of an organization, it is important that insurgents establish not only a base of localized popular support, but also a membership cohort that can ensure organizational longevity and viability. The competitiveness of the environment in which a rebel group forms can also necessitate the need

\(^{39}\) It is worth noting that more research is needed to understand the mode of recruitment into secession movements. This might aid in clarifying the differences in findings in previous studies.
for less discriminatory recruitment practices. For the PKK, the group’s ethno-nationalist goals which first promoted the establishment of an independent Kurdish state can help explain why it began recruiting children during its formation, but the heavily saturated ‘rebel marketplace’ likely influenced the group’s initial recruitment behavior.

A robust literature exists that examines the effects of rebel rivalries on groups’ recruitment strategies, employment of violence against civilians, and conflict and organizational duration (Metelits 2009a, 2009b; Balcells 2010; Fjelde and Nilsson 2012; Wood and Kathman 2015; Nygård and Weintraub 2015; Phillips 2015). Recent work by Fjelde and Nilsson (2018) suggests that nascent rebel groups face severe challenges and barriers to entry from incumbent groups, particularly during times civil war. In order to achieve a viable rebellion, these groups must mobilize a sufficient portion of a population and leverage resources in an effort to challenge not only state authority, but also competing organizations. Metelits (2009a) further claims that rebellions which face active rivalry are incentivized to pursue violent relationships with civilians in comparison to groups operating in environments marked by low levels of rebel competition. She suggests that “rivals play a crucial role because competition threatens resources, and the lack of resources in turn threatens survival” (Metelits 2009a, 161). Borrowing from these theories, I propose that when barriers to entry into the rebel marketplace are high, emerging groups are willing to recruit children as they increase an organization’s opportunity for both survival and longevity.

At the same time, it is important to consider the prevailing international norms during the time period in which the PKK formed. A robust literature on the evolution of international norms exists, but the power of norms to influence actor’s behavior has been heavily contested (Florini 1996; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Checkel 1998). This is perhaps no more evident than in the
debate surrounding the evolution of international human rights norms (Donnelly 1986; Hawkins 2004; Hafner-Burton 2014) and is more complicated when one considers how non-state actors choose to comply with or reject these norms (Clapham 2006; Jo 2015; Huang 2016). Recent work suggests that rebel compliance to international human rights treaties such as the ban against the use of landmines are best understood by first recognizing that non-state actors and states’ decisions are not independent of one another (Gleditsch et al. 2018). Put differently, it may matter what your adversary does in terms of committing to international treaties aimed at curtailing certain human rights abuses. However, I argue that the timing of norms is of particular importance as they often take substantial periods of time to diffuse and even longer when the target of diffusion is a non-state armed group (Pegram 2010; Greenhill 2010; Towns 2012). In the case of the PKK at its onset, a true norm against child soldiering was inconsequential at best and only beginning to take shape. The lack of an established norms suggests that the PKK had no genuine reason to avoid recruiting children.

H1: The competitiveness of the environment in which rebel groups emerge increases the likelihood that the group will include children.

The first hypothesis speaks specifically to the determinants of the PKK’s initial decision to use child soldiers and how these decisions might have impacted the organization’s behavior in later time periods. However, the dynamics of conflict can also play a crucial role in insurgent’s behavior. Scholars have shown how conflict duration and intensity can make previously unacceptable practices (i.e. child soldiering) more likely (Tynes 2018). For the PKK, an organization that used children before conflict had begun, duration and intensity are poor
predictors of the organization’s initial decisions to recruit children. However, conflict intensity and duration likely influenced that patterns of recruitment in the PKK.

Building on recent literature on the logic of violence against civilians in war (Zhukov 2014; Wood 2014; Schwartz and Straus 2018) I argue that for the PKK, the Turkish government’s counterinsurgency campaigns—characterized by heightened levels of violence and human rights abuses against the Kurdish population in Turkey—contributed to the PKK’s increase recruitment and use of child soldiers. More specifically, I build on the work of Zhukov (2014) and Scwhartz and Straus (2018) and suggest that the causal mechanism at work is one where government violence against civilians can function in two distinct ways which, in turn, affect rebels’ recruitment and civilian support. First, violence that is indiscriminate in nature can make remaining neutral more costly for civilians, pushing them to join rebel groups and increasing the diversity of recruits willing to join (Zhukov 2014). Secondly, increasing levels of civilian violence can lead to significant rebel losses which can affect not only recruitment behavior over the course of a conflict, but civilians’ support of rebels. Scwhartz and Straus (2018) suggest that the logic of violence against civilians during wartime is best understood by considering a perpetrator’s calculations about civilians’ loyalty to the opposition. If civilians are believed to be ‘salvageable,’ that is convinced not to support an insurgency, then violence can be used as a means to “impose costs to break bonds of loyalty with insurgents” (Schwartz and Straus 2018, 230).

Such an argument complements Wood (2014) who argued that rebels’ diminishing material capabilities due to government violence can negatively impact the prospects for the group to garner support for their movement. Simply put, their decrease in material capabilities can adversely affect civilians’ calculations about the cost of supporting a rebel movement (i.e.
supporting a losing a cause). However, I contend that for the PKK, increasing levels of violence, specifically group-selective violence which directly affected and marginalized large portions of the Kurdish population in Turkey, ultimately benefited the PKK terms of recruitment.

Though the logic of indiscriminate violence has been widely discussed in extant literature it has been met with mixed conclusions about its effectiveness as a counterinsurgency strategy (e.g. Mason and Krane 1989; Kalyvas 2006; Downes 2007; Lyall 2009; Machain et al. 2011; Souleimanov and Siroky 2016). Kalyvas’ (2006) seminal piece on the logic of violence during civil conflict argued that indiscriminate violence would only/mostly occur when government and rebel forces operated in equilibrium. Put differently, where one’s opponent was too weak to protect the civilian population, but a combatant’s control over such a territory was deficient, indiscriminate tactics can make noncooperation increasingly costly for civilians (Kalyvas 90-91). When control is clearly maintained and intelligence is robust and accurate, combatants can more selectively employ violence to weed out opposition forces/sympathizers. Under such conditions the gathering of information through the use of selective violence is viewed as an effective and reliable approach whereas indiscriminate violence can be counterproductive as it runs the risk of alienating a population and potentially prompting defections to the opposition—rendering such a strategy ineffective.

However, Zhukov (2014), while agreeing with the logic of indiscriminate violence outlined by Kalyvas, suggests that such a classification fails to accurately reflect the reality of armed conflict. Specifically, while indiscriminate violence can often be categorized as an inefficient strategy for punishing an enemy and may be counterproductive for those relying on such tactics, there is a threshold effect (Zhukov 2014, 249). That is, severe levels of indiscriminate violence can make “supporting the indiscriminate side” more beneficial for
civilians as it “maximizes their own chances of survival.” While selective violence is often the preferred choice, indiscriminate punishment at high levels can, in effect, kill enough of the opposition along with innocent civilians to successful counter the opposition forces and deter would-be supporters from joining in rebellion.

Still, scholars have identified a fundamental flaw in the labeling of violence as ‘indiscriminate’ and ‘selective’ (Schwartz and Straus 2018). Indiscriminate violence often denotes random killing while selective implies violence targets specific individuals within a larger population. In the case of the PKK against the Turkish government, Turkish counterinsurgency efforts might better be classified as group-selective violence (Schwartz and Straus 2018). Group-selective violence is best defined as large-scale violence that targets a specific category of the population (Schwartz and Straus 2018, 223). The distinguishing characteristic of this form of violence is that it clarifies ambiguities in both indiscriminate and selective violence by acknowledging that violence can be both random (indiscriminate) and selective. However, the selective nature of this form of violence is focused on the group level as opposed to the individual. In response to growing Kurdish support for the PKK, the Turkish government’s counterinsurgency strategy against the PKK beginning in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s became especially brutal. As the PKK was able to successfully mobilize a larger portion of the Kurdish population, the government increased its level of group-selective violence against the Kurds.

The degree of government violence, particularly the escalation of group-selective violence, can alter rebel groups’ calculations about recruitment. Specifically, it can encourage a group to open its doors to a more diverse set of civilian supporters. Though groups may still have concerns about recruit loyalty and allegiance, as a rebel group incurs significant losses, their
“time horizon(s) often shrinks” (Wood 2014, 982), forcing them to make decisions that may otherwise have been avoided. Put differently, when facing heavy losses, rebels’ must “prioritize short-term strategic objectives” over long term goals and ambitions (Wood 2014, 982). As a result, a rebel group must do what is necessary to keep the organization afloat, even if this means increasing micro-level forms of violence against civilians. For the PKK, a group with the enduring goal of the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, organizational survival became the short-term objective in the face of violent repression. Seeking to maintain rebellion and avoid organizational failure I offer the following hypothesis:

\[ H2: \text{Increasing levels of group-selective violence will increase the rate at which rebel groups recruit child soldiers.} \]

Returning to the discussion of norms against child soldiering, it is clear that many changes have occurred since the PKK first launched its insurgency. Consequently, it is important to revisit the effect that norms may have had on the group’s behavior over time. Specifically, as the norm against child soldiering has become more universally accepted and entrenched, has it impacted the group’s recruitment and use of child soldiers? Inherent in this discussion is the role of humanitarian organizations and state actors in the reinforcement norms as they evolve. For protections against child soldiering, two major international human rights conventions were adopted after the PKK’s formation and onset of subsequent rebellion. The first, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), established the age of a child soldier as below 15, but charged states with prioritizing the eldest when considering those between the ages of 15 and 18. In 2002, the first optional protocol to the CRC defined a child as any person below the age of
18 (UN 2000). Turkey, the PKK’s primary opponent, ratified the former in 1995 and the latter in 2004.

In 2000, a non-governmental organization (NGO) known as the Geneva Call officially launched with the goal of engaging armed non-state actors (ANSAs) in an effort to promote their compliance with international humanitarian norms (Geneva Call 2019). Among other efforts, in 2010 the group launched the “Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict” (Sjoeberg, 2013). The primary intent of this deed was to ensure children were not used as soldiers and to protect them during times of conflict. In 2013, the PKK signed the aforementioned “Deed of Commitment,” leading to the question of why the organization chose to commit to the discontinuation of child recruitment (or at least signaled some interest in doing so). This shift in organizational behavior suggests that some rebel groups may be motivated to abandon strategies from the past in an effort to improve reputation and legitimacy.

The factors and conditions that may lead to such behavioral shifts are complex. However, I argue that two inter-related features are particularly salient for rebel compliance: a) opportunities for peace and b) perceived opportunities for goal attainment. Both factors can increase the likelihood that rebels comply with international norms—particularly when these groups seek political autonomy. First, opportunities for peaceful negotiation which, by their nature, encourage belligerents to lay down their arms, can also increase the likelihood that groups refrain from other practices that would exacerbate peace and extend the conflict, including continued child recruitment. There are a number of instances where a genuine commitment to peace was uncertain and belligerents’ continued to recruit children (i.e. the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone); however, I suggest that the abandonment of child
recruitment (or at least the signaling to do so) is more likely as the norm has become more entrenched in the social fabric of the international community.

Secondly, when rebels’ goals are perceived to be more attainable, their behavior may shift in ways which see increased compliance with international norms. This is more probable when considering the specific goals of various rebel groups, distinguishing between those with separatist ambitions and those which seek regime overthrow. Although debate exists in the child soldier literature as to the affect rebels’ goals may have on decisions to recruit children in the first place, there is at least some overlap in their theoretical arguments which suggests these specific groups are more likely to desire and/or need domestic and international legitimacy (Jo 2015; Lasley and Thyne 2015). Jo (2015, 164) specifically argues that separatist groups are those most likely to be “switchover compliers.” She contends that secessionist rebellions are more likely to recognize the value and importance in building legitimacy over time for goal attainment. Her theory of seeking legitimacy suggests that even though rebels with secessionist goals may be more likely to recruit children, largely due to their increased levels of popular support, over time these groups’ behavior can shift as they find merit in compliance with international norms as they seek to transition from violent struggle to the political realm. I build on this foundation, suggesting that while rivalry and conflict dynamics may necessitate the use of child soldiers, inching closer to successful goal attainment can increase the likelihood that these groups move in the direction of compliance with international norms. This leads to the final hypothesis:
H3: Opportunities for peace and prospects for goal attainment will impact secessionist rebel groups’ recruitment of children especially as the international norm against child soldiering has become more established.

Research Design

To investigate these theoretical arguments and explore new insights on the conditions that lead to rebels’ decisions to recruit child soldiers and the conditions that lead to variations in the levels of recruitment I examine the PKK’s behavior since its inception in 1978. Generally, I examine three distinct time periods. First, I consider the PKK’s onset and the factors leading to their inclusion of children as the organization formed. Next I turn to the period of its first (and main) insurgency which began in 1984. During this period, I am able to examine how the characteristics of a conflict can influence child recruitment patterns (H2). Lastly, I examine the period from 2000-2016. This period began with a cessation of hostilities before the conflict recurred in 2004. I focus especially on the group’s decision to sign the Geneva Call’s “Deed of Commitment” in 2013 and the subsequent effect on child recruitment (H3).

In terms of data collection, I rely on a) qualitative evidence from secondary source materials in the case analysis; and b) a unique dataset which provides demographic information on over 9,000 deceased PKK fighters who were killed at some point during the PKK conflict between 1984 and 2016. The Kurdish Insurgency Militants (KIM) dataset affords the ability to identify recruitment information including age of recruitment, period of recruitment, years in the ranks, and so on (Tezcür 2016). As a result, I can, with more accuracy than most, identify when child recruitment was initiated, how it likely evolved over the course of the conflict, and how the
PKK’s own commitment to stop recruiting children has transpired. I discuss the details of the KIM dataset below.

**Kurdish Insurgent Militants Dataset**

Before turning to the examination of the PKK, some discussion on the details of the KIM dataset is warranted. First, given that all individuals coded in the dataset are deceased, there are a number of potential biases that qualify the inferences one can make. Most importantly is the question of whether the demographics of those killed are representative of the entire group. In total, the KIM dataset contains information on 9,196 PKK militants. Directly relevant to this project, recruitment age information is available for 6,157 of these individuals and death age reported in 6,614 of the cases. When a recruit’s death age is 17 or below I am able to clearly identify that the individual in question was recruited before the age of 18 and subsequently count such instances as a child soldier recruit. After accounting for this, I am left with 6,202 individuals who can be identified as either a child soldier or not during some point in the insurgency. Though age information for all 9,196 militants would be ideal, having age information for over two-thirds of the sample affords the opportunity to leverage important insights about group recruitment behavior and increases the validity of inferences we can make about the patterns of child recruitment specifically, across different periods of time throughout the insurgency.

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40 For a robust discussion on potential biases see Tezcür (2016, 250).
41 In total, 45 individuals were identified as child soldiers by their death date, but not information on their recruitment year is available.
The Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK)

Founded in 1974 by Abdullah Öcalan, and officially established in 1978, the PKK launched its insurgency against the Turkish government in 1984 with the call for a creation of an independent state of Kurdistan (Tezcür 2010). At its onset, the organization encountered an environment ripe with competition as nearly a dozen other Kurdish nationalist organizations were already in existence, each more established and embedded in Kurdish society. These Kurdish nationalist groups engaged in all aspects of civil and social life. They “published journals and newspapers, established youth associations, were influential in unions and professional associations” (Tezcür 2015, 249). Yet, though nearly all political organizations demanded Kurdish liberation, significant differences over the most appropriate and effective strategy to achieve such a goal remained (Gunes 2013). For the PKK, and Öcalan specifically, the political struggle for liberation would best be achieved through military contestation that would lead to a wider popular rebellion. In short, violence was seen as the most effective way for the achievement of true national liberation (Gunes 2013, 256). For these reasons, amongst others, the PKK became the hegemonic Kurdish Nationalist group within Turkey by 1984. In August 1984, the group launched its insurgency against the Turkish regime in a series of coordinated attacks on military stations in Eruh and Semdinli, two small towns in southeastern Turkey (Bacik and Coskun 2011, 251). Over the course of the next three decades, the PKK would experience significant ebbs and flows in terms of its military success and in the pursuit of both its political and nationalist goals.

In the context of their recruitment practices, the PKK employed large numbers of children within their rank and file throughout the duration of its insurgency, continuing to use combatants under the age of 18 today (US Department of State 2018). Though the majority of global reports and literature investigating the PKK’s child soldiering argue that the systematic
nature of recruitment began around 1994 (Singer 2006; Child Soldiers International 2008), patterns of recruitment across the KIM dataset suggest that children were regularly involved in the organization since its onset. This alludes to the importance of considering when rebel child soldiering begins to better understand the dynamics that influence the behavior.

**Tracing Patterns of Recruitment**

It is clear from an evaluation of previous literature that many factors contribute to rebel child soldiering. Yet, for the PKK, the available explanations are not sufficient to fully understand child recruitment patterns. I contend that the organization’s decision to recruit children cannot be understood without exploring the patterns of recruitment during its formation. First, the five years preceding the PKK’s formation—the “existential period”—was a time of growing competition amongst Kurdish organizations. Prior to the 1971 coup, the Turkish military had initiated operations against Kurds in the southeast in what they identified as a pre-emptive action against the rise of Kurdish identity and nationalism (Jongerden 2017, 139). During this time and throughout the early 1970s, state repression reached a pinnacle and public organization became not only impractical, but illegal. Leadership of central Kurdish organizations were either arrested or executed in an effort to deter Kurdish activism (Jongerden and Akkaya 2011, 126-127). It was under such conditions and in response to growing Turkish repression that the PKK began to take root.

The gradual de-securitization of public spaces after elections in 1973 saw the establishment of a number of rival Kurdish organizations. By 1977, there were at least nine illegal Kurdish organizations within Turkey and this number would continue to rise (Marcus 2009, 39). The core membership of the PKK, with Öcalan at its helm, took shape in small
meetings held in apartments and homes within and around Ankara where strategy for revolution was discussed and recruitment/vetting of new members took place (Jongerden and Akkaya 2011, 128). In such a crowded political space, Kurdish groups struggled to differentiate themselves as they competed for support. For the Kurdish nationalist population, the vast majority of which supported the unifying goal of an independent Kurdish state, selecting which group to support and/or affiliate oneself with became challenging.

For the PKK, turning away members during the group’s formation in such a competitive environment would have been imprudent, particularly given its status as a latecomer to the marketplace of Kurdish nationalist organizations. This suggests that the inclusion of children, particularly for nationalist movements, might be a strategic calculation, one which aims to ensure both organizational dominance and longevity. Put differently, excluding recruits based on age would decrease the pool of available recruits, limiting not only the size of the organization’s membership, but also threatening the sustainability of the movement. The inclusion of young individuals could augment the group and would assist in ensuring the durability of its mission. The exclusion of such a population would directly jeopardize its ambitions. For the PKK, this may have been a more likely problem given the crowded atmosphere in which the group formed. The presence of rival ethno-nationalist organizations, largely identified as overlooking key divisions of Kurdish society, appears to be an important factor in the organization’s composition across multiple cleavages. The political landscape, coupled with its ethno-nationalist foundations likely meant that the PKK’s door for recruitment, regardless of age, was open. Overall, this generally suggests that a political environment that is saturated with rival groups can impact an organization’s recruitment practices, potentially leading to the incorporation of child soldiers (H1). Further, this appears especially likely when groups’ ideological roots are situated in ethno-
nationalist aspirations that attempt to mobilize large portions of a population leading to an influx in voluntary recruits.

Specifically, the PKK’s ethno-nationalist foundations which encouraged violence as a means to achieve liberation, first against rival Kurdish organizations and then later against the Turkish state (Tezcür 2010; 2015) was an attractive message for young persons and highlights how rivalry can encourage rebel child soldiering. By the time the organization officially formed in 1978, there were already a number of individuals below the age of 18. As seen in Figure 4, of the 117 deceased fighters recruited between 1975 and the year of the PKK’s official founding (1978), 32 were recruited under the age of 18 and 16 of these recruits were age 15 and below.

Figure 4. PKK Recruits by Age 1975-1978
As Figure 4 illustrates, the PKK enlisted children, recruiting at least two 13 year old boys during this time period. Though all Kurdish groups espoused nationalist ideologies which criticized colonizing states for their historical ill-treatment of the Kurds, Öcalan and the PKK were arguably the most adamant about the importance of armed struggle for liberation and argued that violence was critical for the emancipation of the Kurds (Tezcür 2015). Further, as Tezcür (2015, 253) claims, none of the PKK’s competitors made sufficient attempts to appeal to the peasant class and this was problematic as they were “the overwhelming majority of Kurdish society.” This call to action, particularly amongst students and peasants was an intentional calculation by Öcalan to mobilize marginalized sects of Kurdish society in an effort to compete against opposition Kurdish groups. The strategy not only paid off, but increased the likelihood of young individuals in the organization. In particular, many of the early members came from relatively poor backgrounds and were young students, peasants, or laborers (Tezcür 2015, 256-257).

Though a key limitation in this study is the inability to compare the exact ages of individuals across a large sample of rival Kurdish groups operating in Turkey before 1980, a limited sample of individual level demographic information is available for one such rival—the Kurdistan National Liberators (KUK). The KUK was the Kurdish nationalist group that most paralleled the PKK. The organization drew support from Kurds in the border regions between Iraq and Syria and had close ties to the Bazani movement, an Kurdish insurrection in Iraq (Tezcür 2015). Originating in 1978, the KUK, in spite of its similarities, violently clashed with

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42 Interestingly, both would achieve commander status in the PKK prior to being killed in the 1990s.
43 Demographic data on militants in the KUK was made available through personal communication with Güneş Murat Tezcür.
the PKK and would ultimately succumb to this violent competition following the 1980 Turkish coup (Gunes 2013, 252).

Demographic information of over 60 deceased KUK militants reveals that this group also recruited child soldiers. Of the 49 deceased militants for which some age information exist (birth or death age), there are seven instances where an individual under the age of 18 participated in the KUK (~ 14 percent of cases).\textsuperscript{44} The PKK and KUK cases highlight both how inter-organizational competition amongst ethno-nationalist organizations can increase the likelihood of child soldier recruitment especially for those organizations that emerge late in the rebel marketplace. For these groups specifically, child recruitment can offer access to a broader and more diverse collection of the general population while also possibly contributing to organizational longevity.

The timing of the organization’s founding in relation to international norms against child soldiering can also help account for its recruitment of children as it prepared for insurgency. In particular, the inclusion of children at the early stages in the group’s existence was unsurprising given the lack of international and domestic safeguards against the practice. For instance, although the 1977 additional protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 established that no one under the age of 15 should be conscripted into the armed forces, those over the age of 15 could sign on voluntarily (ICRC 2019). For a new organization looking to establish its membership base, this international treaty held little influence over its recruitment behavior.

\textsuperscript{44} In only one case did an individual die while under the age of 18 suggesting that the way the KUK employed children differed from the PKK.
Moreover, the Turkish state refrained from signing the optional protocol, suggesting that an age
delineation for military service, even at the state level, was undesirable.

Although this explanation seems apparent, scholarly investigations on rebel child
soldiering often fail to consider the lack of and/or evolution of norms in explaining group
behavior. For the PKK, an organization that formed during the first genuine international attempt
to establish a norm against child soldiering, it is unsurprising that the group would end up using
children in their insurgency. Moreover, rebel compliance with international human rights norms
is more the exception than the rule (Jo 2015; 2018). Overall, rebel groups do not operate in static
environments and for the PKK, the establishment and viability of the organization were central
to goal attainment. Compliance with an evolving human rights norm would be, at best, a second
order concern for the PKK, challenging the argument that secessionist movements by their very
nature are more likely to comply with the norm against child soldiering especially early in their
struggle (Lasley and Then 2015).

The remainder of the 1970s until the year prior to onset of its insurgency in 1984 saw the
PKK actively continue its recruitment of child soldiers. Of the 112 members recruited from
1978-1983, at least 27 were under the age of 18. The youngest recruit reported during this
phase was a 10-year-old girl who would serve in the insurgency for 15 years before being killed
at the age of 25. As these patterns suggest, child recruitment was a regular occurrence in the
PKK even before it initiated guerilla warfare and the group even included young girls into the
movement.

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45 Age information is only available for 83 of these 112 individuals. Of the 27 recruits under the age of 18 during
this period, at least 11 were under the age of 15.
The Onset of Insurgency (1984-1989)

The regularity with which the PKK recruited those under 18 as it prepared for insurgency suggests that the group saw no issue with child soldiering and arguably saw their inclusion as potentially useful for organizational longevity. Other competitive leftist and Kurdish movements, like the KUK, had crumbled in the aftermath of the 1980 military intervention. Meanwhile, the success of the PKK in becoming the hegemonic Kurdish nationalist movement demonstrated that the pursuit of violence and the strategic decision to adopt more inclusive recruitment practices were pivotal in mobilizing marginalized portions of the Kurdish population which helped ensure its durability. The growing popularity of the group also meant it was primed for Öcalan’s ultimate plan of launching a violent insurgency that would lead to a “long-term people’s war” (Tezcür, 2015).

Owing to the promise of revolution, the PKK launched its first attacks roughly six years from its inception. In response to these attacks, 1985 saw the Turkish government reconstitute an offensive counterinsurgency tactic known as the village guard system (Belge, 2011). The village guard system was an attempt by the Turkish government at community policing to counter the PKK’s growing influence in the Kurdish regions of Turkey. The system was relatively straightforward. Kurdish individuals were recruited by Turkish authorities within various rural villages and those appointed were charged with defending their communities from the PKK. In addition, villagers were typically required to fulfill certain ultimatums in assisting Turkish forces in eliminating PKK members, supporters, and sympathizers (Belge 2011, 106; Abbas and Yigit 2016). Many of the village guard were paid salaries to meet the demands set forth by the Turkish authorities and this increased tension across Kurdish communities (Criss 1995).
implementation of this system demonstrated a clear attempt by the Turkish government to overcome the information problem in detecting the PKK threat in the southeast.

The village guard system draws parallels to Kalyvas’ (2006) argument that the logic of violence, whether selective or indiscriminate, is conditional upon the control exerted over territory. The system signaled an attempt by the Turkish regime to extend its control over Kurdish villages by enabling the Turkish army to gain more accurate intelligence and information about those specific individuals who were against the regime and sympathetic to the PKK’s plight. This would, in theory, improve the government’s deployment of violence, allowing them to selectively target PKK members and sympathizers to eradicate the PKK’s influence village by village. When villages refused to partake in the village guard system, the government interpreted these villages as pro-PKK and, in turn, engaged in higher degrees of group-selective violence. As Belge (2016) argues, this informant strategy was deficient and problematic from its onset as the Turkish government did not have an accurate sense of which villages/provinces were majority Kurdish. Instead, the supposed attempt to develop a selective violence strategy was ineffective and actually arbitrary, leading to increasing levels of group-selective violence by the government and questionable loyalty amongst the village guard.

The consequences of such policies undoubtedly increased tension within the region as civilians were caught in the middle of brutal policies by both sides. The PKK’s response to the implementation of the village guard system was the establishment of its own policy of civilian targeting, and specifically members of the village guard and their families. As village guard members were identified, the PKK would selectively target these individuals, murdering them and their families in an effort at deterring cooperation with the Turkish government (Romano 2006, 86-87). From 1987-1989, the PKK was especially violent against village guard members,
deliberately wiping out “village guard and agha families, men, women, and children, without compunction, in Mardin, Siirt, and Hakkari provinces” (McDowall 2004, 425). This precarious situation undermined the sustainability of the village guard system for the government. In short, those individuals that did sign on to help the Turkish government became prime targets of the PKK and those not joining the system became targets of the Turkish army. Civilians were left with limited options in terms of security. Given the government’s policy of violence when villagers refused to cooperate, the deficiencies in the design of the system which largely relied on arbitrary classification of Kurdish provinces, and the PKK’s selective targeting of government collaborators, the choice to flee or seek shelter with the PKK increased the opportunity for child recruitment.

As a result, the period between 1984 and 1989 saw increased rates of child recruitment. Figure 5 clearly illustrates that this period had the highest ratio of child recruits to adults. Following the initial attacks in 1984, the PKK benefited from a marginal increase in the degree of popular mobilization which likely contributed to the spike in recruits. However, evidence suggests that the rate of recruitment necessary to seriously challenge the regime was not sufficient for the group’s ambitious goals (Gunes 2013). As a result, by October 1986 at its Third Congress, the PKK discussed and implemented a conscription system which was viewed as a means to augment military capabilities (Gunes 2013; Schoon 2017). Though the specifics of the conscription policy are ambiguous, in particular if there was an age requirement, the coercive nature of such a strategy was a likely contributor to the increase in the ratio of child soldiers.
Although individual level data identifying whether a recruit was conscripted is elusive, the available data suggests that the conscription of children was highest during the late 1980s (Table 8).46 Though the conscription policy was successful at increasing membership numbers, the consequences of such a policy also threatened the PKK’s reputation amongst the Kurdish population, even jeopardizing their ability to mobilize popular support in the face of violent government repression. Fear over a declining support base, coupled with the aggressive nature of the government’s village-guard system led the group to formally abandon the policy of conscription in 1990 although available evidence suggests the practice continued into later time periods.

46 Information on whether an individual was conscripted is only available for 78 individuals, but anecdotal evidence points to the prevalence of forced recruitment. Thus, caution should be taken in considering how generalizable these patterns were across recruitment periods.
Table 8. Conscription by the PKK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment period</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-1984</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-1989</td>
<td>67 (31 child soldiers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1994</td>
<td>9 (5 child soldiers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1999</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-2000</td>
<td>No data/missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Height of Conflict (1990-1999)

Militarily, the PKK had some success prior to 1990. However, Turkish policy shifted dramatically in the 1990s (Bacik and Coskun 2011). Compared to the previous decade, the PKK incurred significant losses at the hands of the Turkish government and its crippling counterinsurgency campaign especially after 1993. During this time, the organization was flooded with recruits from the southeastern portions of Turkey gaining a number of new recruits from urban centers. This increase in recruits demonstrated the PKK’s willingness to remove many barriers to entry and unsurprisingly saw an influx in the number of recruits under the age of 18 (Marcus 2009, 170). While the organization had traditionally been skeptical of allowing members into the group out of fear that they were government agents sent to infiltrate the group and/or that they would be uncommitted during harsh times (Romano 2006; Marcus 2009), the brutal policies enacted by Turkish forces resulted in the erosion of strict selective criteria for membership. For instance, as Figure 6 shows, the PKK saw a significant increase in the rate of girl soldiers from 1990-1999. Between 1984 and 1989, of the 232 child recruits only 19 were girls (roughly 8 percent of child recruits). However, of the over 1,600 child soldiers recruited
between 1990-1999, over 25 percent were girls. This demonstrates the shifting nature of inclusive recruitment that occurred during the height of violence. At the same time, the high levels of casualties also suggests that, in order to maintain fighters, the PKK needed to allow many Kurds (i.e. children and women) to join (Marcus 2009, 170). However, many youth were inexperienced on the battlefield and were either more likely to die in battle or more likely to run off than their adult counterparts (Marcus 2009).

![Figure 6. Boy and Girl Recruits in the PKK](image)

Despite this swell in recruitment, the PKK was unable to translate increased manpower into sustained military success. The brutality of the PKK’s fight against Turkey was highlighted by the struggle the organization faced in not only getting and retaining recruits, but in keeping them alive. Huseyin Topgider, a prominent PKK commander, alleged that getting recruits back to PKK strongholds was challenging, “as you are returning to a village with a new member, there
would be an attack and they would die even before getting a chance to change their clothes” (Marcus 2009, 290). In mid-1993, government dialogue with the PKK led to a brief cessation of hostilities. At the time, Turkish president Özal had encouraged Öcalan to pursue a ceasefire agreement as the chronic Kurdish issue remained a significant obstacle for Turkey’s EU aspirations (Ozkahraman 2017). Although the ceasefire had initially been brokered by the PKK, the group violated the ceasefire by launching an ambush against the Turkish military, killing 33 unarmed soldiers (Marcus 2009, 221). Numerous questions surrounded the attack which was largely seen as the PKK’s response to uncertainty of the Turkish government’s commitment to peace following the untimely death of President Özal. Regardless, the attack signaled the start of an even more brutal government campaign to defeat the PKK. The government’s policy became more direct, Turkish forces would infiltrate Kurdish villages, force everyone to the center of the village and then burn houses, business, etc. Villagers were forced to flee and with the looming threat of this policy, and entire villages evacuated to avoid facing a similar fate (Marcus 2009, 222). One survivor recalled the Turkish military accusing his village of supporting the PKK, claiming that “you are giving bread to the PKK…either evacuate your village or we will burn down your houses with you inside of them” (Abbas and Yigit 2016, 303). Estimates suggest that upwards of 3,000 villages were evacuated during the 1990s (Yegen 2009).

The intensity of the conflict and degree of civilian violence also ballooned. To put in context, between 1984 and 1994 roughly 13,000 civilians and soldiers had been killed, but approximately half of these fatalities occurred between the years 1992 and 1994 (HRW, 1995). Such levels of coercive group-selective violence became counterproductive for the government as it encouraged Kurdish individuals to seek refuge and security with the opposition (i.e. Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). While Zhukov (2014) argued that indiscriminate counterinsurgency policies
at the extreme end can coerce civilians to side with the government, it is clear that such a policy was ineffective. It is clear that the Turkish government’s policy, reflective of a group-selective violence strategy, was designed to coerce the Kurdish population to refrain from support of the PKK. Yet, the nature of such violence was self-defeating. The PKK, who had been more selective in their use of violence (targeting village guard members and other Kurdish collaborators), were able to augment their base of support.

The period between 1990-1994 saw a significantly higher number of child soldiers recruited into the ranks of the PKK (See Figure 5). However, as a ratio of the group’s total recruits during this time, there was a slight decrease from the earlier time period. This does not necessarily suggest that the PKK decreased their rate of child recruitment, but more likely points to an increase in the number of adults willing to join the organization in the face of severe levels of group-selective violence targeting large sects of the Kurdish population. This is an interesting point as it speaks to literature which argues child soldiers will be more likely to be used when conflicts are more violent. Undoubtedly, more children were used to help fill the rank and file, but the patterns of their use were not markedly different from general recruitment patterns during early times in the insurgency.

The Turkish government’s aggressive counterinsurgency policies severely crippled the PKK by the late 1990s. Interviews with a female PKK commander illustrated the struggles in adapting to Turkish force’s tactics. “You would attack a military outpost and another one was built in its place…in 1993 we had been very successful, but in 1994, we lost a lot” (Marcus, 2009, p. 223). Figure 7 demonstrates the PKK’s struggles throughout the early and mid 1990s, reporting the death rates of recruits since 1984. As shown, the number of PKK fighters killed throughout the 1990s spiked in 1992 and again in 1997 with general period between 1990-1999
accounting for well over 50 percent of all fatalities identified in the KIM dataset. It also shows how children were regular participants in combat with at least 505 children (<=17) killed between 1990 and 1999. This lends some degree of support to H2, suggesting that child recruitment can increase in periods of increasing violence and hostility. At the same time, this finding clarifies work in previous studies that contends increased child recruitment is most likely when conflict intensity is at its peak (e.g. Tynes and Early 2015). Still, though the ratio of child to adults declined from 1984 to 1989, the numbers of children recruited spiked when conflict was most explosive.

![Graph](image.png)

**Figure 7.** Comparing Child and Adult PKK Militants 1984-2016

By 1995, the Turkish government was investing heavily in its war against the PKK, spending upwards of $11 billion a year and employing some 220,000 troops (Marcus, 2009, pp.
With roughly 6,000 members, the PKK struggled in its campaign against the government. The drastic losses the organization faced not only in terms of membership numbers, but also as a result of Turkish policies aimed to drive potential supporters and sympathizer out of the region, crippled the PKK’s chances at even achieving Kurdish autonomy (let alone statehood) and jeopardized the group’s very survival.

By 1999 the PKK appeared to be militarily defeated and the organization was on the verge of experiencing a significant change to its leadership. At the end of a brutal decade, Turkish officials captured Abdullah Öcalan while he was in Kenya, with the help of the U.S. who provided intelligence on Öcalan’s whereabouts in addition to diplomatic pressure on Kenya to help turn him over to Turkish authorities (Weiner 1999). With his capture, the PKK agreed to withdraw from Turkey and to a permanent ceasefire (Bacik and Coskun 2011). However, the organization continued to maintain a healthy presence in Turkey and northern Iraq where it would continue to recruit new members, including children.

After Öcalan (2000-2016)

The intensity of the PKK/Turkish conflict waned in the midst of Öcalan’s capture and a ceasefire would hold from 2000-2004. During this time of relative peace the PKK continued to recruit new members including child soldiers, never truly conceding. The conflict would resume in 2005. Tezcür (2010) in particular argued that the reconstitution of conflict was a largely a consequence of the PKK rejecting changes to the political environment that directly challenged its hegemonic status as the principal Kurdish organization in the region. The threat to their very existence by a rival political organization would thus incentivize the PKK to “derail” its competitors, and the de
 facto Kurdish state that would form following the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 would embolden the group, leading to the return of violent conflict (Tezcür 2010).

However, the number of child recruits since 2000 declined from previous time periods, dropping from well over 30 percent of recruits from 1995-1999 to slightly over 20 percent from 2000-2004 (Figure 5). Although this ratio appears to have gradually risen since 2005, the reported number of child soldiers that have been killed since 2000, particularly in comparison to the period from 1990-1999 has dramatically declined (Figure 5).47 This is an interesting point as it suggests that children, used more regularly as fighters during the height of the PKK’s insurgency throughout the 1990s, have been less visible on the ‘battlefield’ since 2000. For instance, between 2005-2012, over 1600 PKK members were killed in conflict. Of these, a minimum of 15 were below the age of 17 at the time they were killed. This represents less than 1 percent of the PKK militants from 2005-2012. In context, of the over 5,000 PKK members killed from 1990-1999, at least 9.2 percent were under the age of 18 when they were killed.

47 The rise in ratio of child soldiers should be interpreted with caution for at least two reasons. First, the number of recruits in the post-2000 appears to have declined as a general trend. Secondly, this ‘observable’ decline may be the result of a decrease in the intensity of conflict between 2000 and 2011 which was substantially lower than previous time periods.
Related to the evolution of norms, 2002 saw a number of states in the international community sign on to the optional protocol to the CRC with respect to children in armed conflict, raising the age of a child to anyone below the age of 18 (UN 2000). Though the PKK was obviously not party to such a treaty, Turkey signed (2000) and ratified (2004) the treaty. At the same time, the PKK began to alter its reporting practices on the age of recruits (Table 9). For instance, between 2000 and 2004, of the 509 militants recruited during this time period, only 4.5 percent lacked information on their age at recruitment. However, between 2005 and 2012, this number nearly quintupled (19.8 percent) alluding to some potential change in organizational behavior related to their willingness to actively report the recruitment of children.

This argument is even more probable when one considers the change in reporting in the 2013-2016 period. In early 2013, the Turkish government and PKK agreed to a ceasefire.
following what was the deadliest year in the conflict since 1999 (Tezcür 2013). Though the increase in intensity was not the sole reason for the shift towards negotiated agreement, it was almost certainly a contributing factor. Erdogan’s attempt to consolidate and enhance his own power opened opportunities for a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish question and although the PKK’s opportunity for an independent Kurdish state was an unlikely prospect at this time, there was a growing sense of opportunities for Kurdish autonomy both within and outside of Turkey.

This was underscored by the general developments across the Middle East including the Arab Spring uprisings which generated conditions of instability and uncertainty. In Syria for instance, the onset of civil war led to an alliance between the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union (PYD) and PKK that greatly concerned Turkey. At the same time, such an alliance, given the PYDs autonomy and territorial control in Northern Syria, along with Erdogan’s softening of relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq were encouraging prospects for the PKK and the broader Kurdish population (Larrabee 2016; Ünal 2016). By early 2013, an incarcerated Öcalan called on the PKK to lay down their arms and withdraw from Turkey, claiming that the time was “ripe for resolution” (Ünal 2016, 107).

Following the ceasefire, with growing prospects for peace and the perception that the PKK’s goals were closer to attainable than they had been in recent years, the PKK took what appeared to be a progressive step in signing onto the Geneva Call’s “Deed of Commitment” to cease its recruitment and use of child soldiers. This offers supporting evidence for H3. On its surface, the commitment may have appeared genuine as Figure 5 illustrates that the number of child soldiers actually recruited (a minimum of 20 out of 193) was significantly less than in earlier time periods. However, as Table 9 shows, of these 193 recruits, age information for over 60 percent of them is unknown. Put differently, of the 70 PKK recruits for which recruitment age
information exists, 20 were below 18 during this time period. Irrespective of the group’s authentic commitment, what remains is an apparent strategic decision to omit recruit information in more than half of the cases. Retrospectively, though the organization’s commitment to refrain from recruiting children appears more rhetorical than substantive given that children were still recruited and died in conflict between 2013 and 2016, the omission of age information suggests that the group was cognizant of the international perception surrounding their child recruitment practices. This may very well coincide with increased international support of the Kurds that was seen during this time period given their relative success in battling the Islamic State. Consequently, the PKK’s commitment to end child soldering illustrates the group’s acknowledgement of an international norm against the practice and possibly demonstrates its attempt of legitimacy seeking at best, and at worst, a way to mitigate negative press related to its behavior.

Table 9. Percentage of PKK Recruits with Unknown Age by Recruitment Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment period</th>
<th>Total PKK Recruits</th>
<th>Recruitment Age Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-1984</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>85 (33.2 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-1989</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>221 (28.3 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1994</td>
<td>3,654</td>
<td>600 (16.4 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1999</td>
<td>1,568</td>
<td>169 (10.8 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2004</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>23 (4.5 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2012</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>103 (19.8 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2016</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>123 (63.7 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1,716</td>
<td>1,715 (99.9 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9,196</td>
<td>3,039 (33.04 percent)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regardless, the PKK’s willingness to sign the Geneva Call’s deed of commitment and the organization’s apparent change in record keeping illustrate some support for H3. The authenticity of their commitment notwithstanding, the PKK has clearly responded to the evolving international norm against child recruitment and use in combat, particularly in comparison to early time periods. Though still including child soldiers, their roles appear to have changed with less children killed in action as a ratio to all deceased fighters.

Recent events further highlight how the PKK has evolved in its recruitment of child soldiers and response to international condemnation. In January 2019, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan vocally condemned the PYD for its recruitment of children in New York Times op-ed (Erdogan 2019). Referencing an August 2018 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report, Erdogan suggested the PYD’s armed wing, the YPG, has violated international law by recruiting children while emphasizing the group’s connection to the PKK. Responding to the 2018 HRW report, the Syrian Defense Forces, and the YPG explicitly, issued a statement emphasizing the group’s commitment to international protocols against child recruitment and willingness to hold violators within their organization accountable (HRW 2018b). This response signaled the group’s recognition of and commitment to international laws illustrating how rebel organizations, especially those with ambitions of autonomy, may shift towards compliance with international norms.

Conclusion
Existing studies on insurgents’ recruitment of child soldiers in armed conflict have primarily been concerned with the determinants of the practice. Yet, while contributing meaningful
insights on the conditions that push rebels to recruit children, little has been done to explore when the practice first begins and how child recruitment varies within a group over the course of a conflict. This paper illustrates the importance of such an investigation, offering an in-depth exploration of the PKK’s child recruitment practices and overcoming limitations in extant studies that fail to consider temporal variation. Though conflict dynamics can often push rebels to engage in practices that might otherwise be off-limits (Tynes 2018), for some groups, the recruitment and use of children occurs far before conflict conditions may necessitate their demand. For the PKK, competition amongst rival organizations and the lack of international norms at its onset, coupled with its ideological roots, contributed to its initial decision to include children. Additionally, once the group incorporated child soldiers it was unlikely that they would abandon the practice, especially given its trajectory to engage in violent armed conflict.

This paper also illustrates how rebel child recruitment patterns might vary over the course of insurgency. For the PKK, though their initial inclusion of children might better be explained by the aforementioned factors, both conflict intensity and duration likely contributed to the continuation of the organization’s recruitment of children at high levels. More specifically, the Turkish government’s deployment of increasing levels of group-selective violence which aimed to eradicate the PKK and its sympathizers was counterproductive and led to increases, first in the ratio of child soldiers in the organization (1984-1989) and then in the overall numbers of active child soldiers (1990s). The logic of group-selective violence to coerce civilian cooperation and suppress dissent (Schwartz and Straus 2018) and rebels’ rationality in responding to changing conflict conditions (Wood 2014) assist in explaining how the PKK became an outlet for numerous Kurds while decreasing their barriers to entry in order to meet short term organizational goals (i.e. survival). The findings are echoed by Tezcür (2010, 785) who
concluded that insurgent groups “are primarily concerned with their survival, even if this contradicts their declared political goals and the interests of the ethnic constituency.”

Lastly, the paper underscores the effect of the establishment and evolution of international norms against child soldiering and how the entrenchment of such norms in the fabric of the international system might make rebels more responsive to changing their behavior, especially for those groups that desire and/or require international legitimacy for goal attainment. For the PKK, an organization seeking to first achieve statehood and later regressing to demands for increased autonomy, continued negative press related to their inclusion of child soldiers only hampered the organization’s prospects for success. Coupled with the peace process in 2013, the group formally committed to refrain from using child soldiers. However, as this paper highlights, the authenticity of commitment was dubious as the PKK appeared to simply change their recording habits related to the demographic information of new recruits. This suggests that rebel organizations might pay attention to the international community’s perception of their behavior and may attempt to signal their legitimacy through their commitment to abide by international norms.

Taken together, this paper emphasizes the importance of considering when rebel groups first begin to recruit child soldiers and in doing so, clarifies a number of theoretical arguments advanced in previous work. Importantly, the project illustrates that the competitiveness of the rebel marketplace (i.e. how many competing organizations are operating) might help explain why groups are more likely to include child soldiers. For the PKK, arriving to the ‘game’ late meant that it would need to actively compete with and recruit from rival Kurdish organizations. This contributed to the organization’s willingness to accept those under 18 early in its existence and also ensured the group’s durability. While this project highlights the complexities
surrounding rebel child soldiering, future research should work to expand efforts aimed at identifying when rebels first start recruiting children across a larger sample of non-state actors. Doing so can offer a more accurate assessment of the conditions that lead to the practice. Further, understanding when the practice first begins can also help clarify the mechanisms of recruitment and how conflict dynamics might influence rebel recruitment over time.

There are also a number of practical implications that arise from this study. First is the importance of paying attention to the environment in which rebel organizations form. Nascent groups that enter a competitive environment can become more likely to recruit non-traditional combatants in order to compete against rivals and to increase their chances at survival. The ideological foundations of such rebel organizations are also an important consideration. For the PKK and other non-state groups that mobilize along ethnic lines with aspirational nationalist goals, the inclusion of non-traditional recruits may be more likely (Jo 2015). As this study suggests, these groups may see benefit in the inclusion of children not only for the short-term goal of augmenting membership numbers, but also for the long-term viability of an organization. This speaks to those who argue that child soldiering is a logical/strategical decision because of their ease of indoctrination (i.e. Beber and Blattman 2013), adding that the inclusion of children can assist in long-term survival of the group as it embeds revolution into the social fabric of a young population. This can even lead to an increased length of a conflict (Haer and Böhmelt 2017). Second, governments facing violent insurgencies should carefully consider their tactics in combating rebels. In Turkey, oppressive policies against the Kurds, increasingly brutal counterinsurgency campaigns beginning in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, and an unwillingness to negotiate with the group, each contributed the PKK’s continued recruitment and use of child soldiers. While decisions on how to combat rebels are undoubtedly complex,
Governments must weigh the human rights costs of their policies and the consequences for vulnerable populations. Put differently, repressive tactics can actually increase rebel child soldiering and with it, the sustainability of an insurgency and possibly even the likelihood of conflict recurrence (Haer and Böhmelt 2016b). Lastly, efforts at monitoring once non-state actors commit to refrain from child recruitment are in need of improvement. Though monitoring is inherently challenging, governments and NGOs alike should work to develop guidelines and mechanisms for monitoring when non-state actors sign on to commitments to cease child recruitment.
References


CHAPTER FIVE: CHILD SOLDIERS AND US SECURITY ASSISTANCE: EXPLORING THE CONDITIONALITY OF THE CHILD SOLDIER PREVENTION ACT

Abstract
Does the United States punish states found in violation of the Child Soldier Prevention Act (CSPA)? This paper investigates the conditions that lead to restrictions in US security assistance to states that use child soldiers. Employing a qualitative strategy using case studies of bilateral security assistance between the United States and four African countries, along with semi-structured interviews, this paper shows that although the US frequently claims human rights records impact the ability to provide certain forms of security assistance, full restrictions are inherently rare. However, the findings show that lethal forms of US security assistance are more likely to be restricted under three specific conditions: when states receive low levels of security assistance in the previous year(s); when child soldiering is a systemic problem within a state’s national army; and when states are supporting non-state actors who employ child soldiers. The implications speak to the tension between US interests and norms promotion in foreign policy decision making.
**Introduction**

In 2013, the United States announced it would cut military aid to Rwanda due to its violation of the Child Soldier Prevention Act (CSPA), a law which restricts the distribution of certain forms of security assistance to governments that use child soldiers or support non-state actors who employ children. Specifically, the Rwandan government was cited for its military support of the M23 rebels, a non-state armed group engaged in the recruitment and use of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). That same year, the US provided the government of South Sudan with over $26 million in security assistance and the government of Chad nearly $8 million despite each government’s direct use of child soldiers.\(^{48}\) On its surface, the answer to why states like South Sudan and Chad continue to receive military assistance appears simple: the US provides these states with specific forms of security assistance because it is in the national interest of the United States to do so. This underscores an inherent clash between foreign policy imperatives and attempts to advance human rights norms, with geopolitical concerns over security and investment often prevailing. Still, the variance in implementation\(^ {49}\) of the CSPA suggests that the US is willing, under certain conditions, to sanction recipient governments.

While the international community has made progressive steps in an effort to eliminate child soldiering as evidenced by the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and 2002 Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the issue continues to persist across states. The 2016 UN Secretary General’s (UNSG) report on children and armed conflict,

\(^{48}\) These totals are aggregate figures of the seven forms of security assistance/aid falling under the purview of the CSPA guidelines.

\(^{49}\) Implementation is used throughout to refer to status of the CSPA. Implementation suggests a state saw security assistance restrictions due to their violations.
for example, implicated 59 parties (8 states and 51 non-state actors) active in conflict during 2015 as using child soldiers (UNSG 2016a). Although the UN list of state violators appears small, human rights advocacy groups such as Child Soldiers International point to at least 46 states who still recruit children into their armed forces (Child Soldiers International 2018).\(^{50}\)

Whether directly incorporating children or supporting non-state groups who conscript children, few states have appeared to suffer tangible consequences for these actions. Most remain unaffected in terms of security assistance from foreign donors, challenging arguments that foreign aid can be a tool for policy advancement (Sullivan, Tessman, Li 2011; Boutton 2014; Swedlund 2016). While empirical assessments have shown that democracies are less likely to provide aid to human rights abusing non-state actors (Salehyan et al. 2014), strategic interests, national security, and historical ties have each influenced US security aid allocations. More recently, the global war on terror (GWOT) ushered in the premise that human rights abuses were often inconsequential if states offered their assistance in combating terrorist threats (Mertus 2008; Sandholtz 2016). This is increasingly evident when examining US security aid disbursements to states such as Egypt and Bahrain despite their poor human rights records. As Neumayer (2003) notes, while states often make verbal commitments to punish human rights abusers, rhetoric rarely corresponds with action.

This paper aims to specify the conditions under which the United States may sanction governments for their human rights practices, but does so by looking specifically at recipient states’ child soldiering practices after the adoption of the CSPA.\(^{51}\) In doing so, the paper adopts a

\(^{50}\) A number of these discrepancies can be attributed to those states which allow individuals between the ages of 16 and 17 to join voluntarily, often with parental consent.

\(^{51}\) Although passed in 2008, the CSPA did not enter into force until 2010. The period under investigation in this study covers 2010-2017.
qualitative approach, using case studies, process-tracing, and semi-structured interviews to explore the dynamics of US security assistance disbursements. This approach offers a unique advantage over quantitative investigations on child soldiering as case studies assist in identifying temporal shifts in states’ child soldiering practices between 2010 and 2017.

From here the paper proceeds in several parts. First, I discuss the CSPA and review past literature on the intersection between human rights and US security aid. I then advance a theoretical argument contending that states’ strategic importance and the character of child soldiering each contribute to the implementation of the CSPA or lack thereof. Extending previous arguments that suggest military aid can be an indicator of strategic importance, I suggest that states that receive higher levels of military support in previous years are less likely to have security aid restricted if in violation of the CSPA. However, although strategic importance is a robust explanation for the continuation of security assistance, I contend that the character of child soldiering can also be an influential factor for decisions to implement the CSPA. This is an important distinction as much of the literature on child soldiers only considers their presence or absence within groups, but fails to consider whether the practice is systemic or unintentional. In the research design section, I introduce the qualitative strategy involving in-depth interviews with policy and human rights experts along with government officials and discuss case selection and the interview procedures. In the analysis section evidence is generally supportive of the central arguments. Strategic importance and the character of child soldiering both impact decisions to implement the conditions of the CSPA. However, I also discover that the location of child soldiers—whether in a state’s national military or within non-state armed groups that receive support from a state—contributes to variation in implementation of the
CSPA. I conclude with a discussion of the relationship between states’ human rights violations and security assistance, policy implications, and directions for continued research.

**Background on the Child Soldier Prevention Act**

The December 2008 signing of the CSPA aimed to “condemn the conscription, forced recruitment, or use of children by governments, paramilitaries, or other organizations” (Public law 110-457). The CSPA can largely be thought of as an attempt to expand the provisions of the Leahy amendment/law—legislation passed in 1997 prohibiting security assistance from both the Departments of State and Defense to foreign governments responsible for “Gross Violations of Human Rights” (GVHR). The Leahy law covered four specific human rights violations: torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and rape. However, the law, while an attempt to increase accountability of recipient states, excluded certain human rights violations including child soldiering (US Department of State 2018a). The CSPA accounted for this omission, formally criminalizing the recruitment or use of child soldiers with section 404 of the CSPA stating the US would not provide certain categories of foreign military assistance to any group in violation of its guidelines. The passing (2008) and full adoption (2010) of the CSPA was a formal signal of acknowledgement that state child soldiering remains an issue and one which the US would no longer tolerate.

States are considered to be in violation of the CSPA under one of four conditions: 1) A state uses anyone under 18 in direct hostilities; 2) A state engages in the compulsory recruitment of anyone under 18 into governmental armed forces; 3) Any instance where of a person under the age of 15 has voluntarily joined the governmental armed forces; 4) Any instance where a person under the age of 18 has been recruited (voluntarily or involuntarily) or used in hostilities by
armed forces distinct from the armed forces of a state. The listing process is often portrayed as both a legal and political exercise. “When decisions are made about the listing of violators, legal counsel is always present” to assist in the process and ensure accuracy/legality of determinations (Interview VII). Others, contend the list is a political exercise, questioning the consistency as governments such as Myanmar have been removed while and states like Afghanistan were never listed. A Human Rights Watch (HRW) official indicated, “While there are certainly legal considerations, the removal of Myanmar from the list in 2017 by the Trump administration and the persistent absence of Afghanistan signal that political considerations are part of the discussion [for listing]” (Interview XI).52

Given the CSPA’s goal to disincentivize ‘bad behavior’ by recipient governments, several forms of security assistance are eligible for restriction. The original list included: International Military Education and Training (IMET), Foreign Military Financing (FMF), Direct Commercial Sales (DCS), Foreign Military Sales (FMS), Excess Defense Articles (EDA), and Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) also known as the Train and Equip Authority.53 In 2013, amidst concerns that certain violators were still benefiting from

52 The composition of the CSPA list and the timing of its formation is also important. The CSPA list is published each June/July in the trafficking in persons (TIP) report. The reporting period covers April 1st through March 31st of the previous year. For example, a government violating the terms of the CSPA in December of 2010 would be listed on the 2011 CSPA list of violators with any aid restrictions applying to the following fiscal year (2012). The list draws heavily form the information in the TIP report which covers the same time period for each respective year. However, other sources are used as are external annual reports. Most notably, the UN Secretary General’s (UNSG) annual report on children in armed conflict is consulted. The major limitation here is that this document covers the calendar year (January 1st – December 31st). Thus, while overlap certainly exists, the variation in time periods covered can invariably lead to discrepancies in the CSPA’s list of violators when compared to the UNSG’s list of states employing child soldiers. Still, there have been cases where the US has designated a state to be in violation of using child soldiers where the UN has left the country off (e.g. 2011 Yemen).

53 Train and Equip Authority gives the Secretary of Defense the authority to train and arm foreign military and security forces for two specified purposes: “1) to enable foreign military/security forces to perform counterterrorism (CT) operations and 2) to enable foreign military forces to participate in or to support military/stability operations in which US armed forces are participating” (Serafino 2014, 4).
security assistance, the CSPA was amended under section 1208 of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act to include the prohibition of peacekeeping support (Public Law 113-4). Consequently, Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) (military aid to fund multilateral peacekeeping/support efforts) and the Peacekeeping Operations-Overseas Contingency Operations (PKO-OCO) (aimed to support US counterterrorism efforts) were added to the list of sanctionable security assistance (Stohl and Dick 2015).

While the CSPA illustrated a positive shift in efforts to combat government child soldiering, it has faced heavy criticism for a series of loopholes which undermine its’ intent (Becker 2017; Stohl and Dick 2016). The most important and widely cited, the national interest waiver, enables the President of the US to waive the prohibition of military aid to states/groups who use child soldiers if a government is “taking measures to comply” and it is in the best interest of the US (Public Law 110-457). The President signs off on any/all waivers, although official decision-making power has been often been devolved to the Secretary of State (most recently in 2015 and 2016 pertaining to Yemen) (Rosen 2017, 20). The national interest waiver has been used in partial form, although this language is not directly written into the CSPA. Partial waivers were heavily employed under the Obama administration and were designed to give exemptions to states for peacekeeping missions or to states attempting to professionalize their military. In particular, partial waivers enabled specific forms of military aid (i.e. IMET and other non-lethal forms of assistance) when the US deemed that reasonable steps were being taken by recipient governments to demobilize, rehabilitate, and reintegrate former child soldiers (Public Law 100-457).

Though the presence of the presidential national interest waiver assisted in passage of the CSPA, these waivers can undermined its intent (State Department – Interview I). From 2010 to
2017, the use/support of child soldiers by governments has been reported in 76 country-years across 14 unique states. In a number of cases, including Myanmar, and Syria, the US had either no obligations to provide and/or the country was ineligible for military assistance. During the same period, 38 cases saw the national interest waiver invoked in part (15 times) or in full (23 times) (Stohl and Dick 2015; Rosen 2017). Countries such as Chad, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and until recently, Yemen, have each benefited from continued military assistance despite multiple years of listing. Few cases—Rwanda (2013), the Central African Republic (2013), and Somalia (2010, 2011, and 2012)—saw the US fully implement the CSPA (see Table 10). Thus, restrictions on security assistance is more exception than rule. In 2010, of the six governments listed only one faced full implementation. By 2017 the list grew to eight states, still with only one facing full implementation of the CSPA. At its peak (2013, 2016), the CSPA list has included ten governments with two states facing full implementation.

Table 10. Violators of the CSPA and Subsequent Waivers and Aid Restrictions 2010-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listing Year (Fiscal Year)</th>
<th>Full Waiver</th>
<th>Partial Waiver</th>
<th>Aid Restricted</th>
<th>Ineligible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010 (2011)</td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 (2012)</td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sudan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listing Year (Fiscal Year)</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Aid Restricted</td>
<td>Ineligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 (2013)</td>
<td>Libya South Sudan</td>
<td>Yemen DRC</td>
<td></td>
<td>Myanmar Sudan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 (2014)</td>
<td>Chad South Sudan</td>
<td>Yemen DRC CAR Somalia</td>
<td>Central African Republic (CAR) Rwanda</td>
<td>Myanmar Sudan Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 (2016)</td>
<td>DRC Nigeria Somalia DRC South Sudan Yemen</td>
<td>Myanmar Sudan Syria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 (2017)</td>
<td>Myanmar Iraq Somalia Rwanda South Sudan Yemen</td>
<td>Sudan Syria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017 (2018)</td>
<td>Mali Nigeria Somalia DRC South Sudan Yemen</td>
<td>Sudan Syria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking closer at Table 11, it is clear that many states still received some form of US security assistance irrespective of their use of child soldiers. For example, South Sudan has appeared on the CSPA list every year since its independence in 2011 yet has received a full (2012, 2013) or partial (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017) waiver in each year despite its recruitment and use of child soldiers. In 2016 alone, UN reports noted that at least 650 children were recruited into the ongoing civil conflict in the country with estimates suggesting as many as 19,000 children having been recruited by both government and rebel forces since fighting began in 2013.
(UNICEF 2018). However, one can also see significant variance in the types of implementation with states shifting from full waivers to partial and vice versa.

**Military/Security Assistance and Human Rights**

The literature assessing the impact of human rights abuses on the flow of military aid has offered a mixed picture. Early work by Cingranelli and Pasquarello (1985) found a positive relationship between human rights practices and the flow of military aid, suggesting that respect for human rights would be rewarded with military assistance, a conclusion later refuted by Carleton and Stohl (1987). Poe et al. (1994) argued that human rights, while appearing to be important determinants in economic and military aid levels, appeared to be secondary considerations for decisions on aid. Ultimately, they concluded that strategic, political, and economic factors were more heavily weighted by donor states, and particularly important for decisions on military aid. This aligns with a Machiavellian approach, “it might be in one’s interest to act morally, but the act should be abandoned when more important interests are at stake” (Poe et al., 2014: 558).

Recent scholarship has painted an increasingly stark picture. Sullivan, Tessman, and Li (2011, 275) for instance, showed that “increasing levels of US military aid significantly reduced cooperative foreign policy behavior.” Their findings suggest uncooperative recipients were more likely to benefit from an increase in US military aid while states who complied/cooperated with US policy objectives were more susceptible to a decrease in military support. Put differently, if a state corrected the problems that military aid was sent to address it could result in the loss of such support. This moral hazard can be seen in the case of the US and Pakistan. Pakistan, a country that has received large amounts of US military aid to combat terrorism, rarely achieves its objectives and may even be incentivized to exaggerate the threat to ensure continued
investment. Thus, it is unsurprising that states continue to violate the terms of the CSPA, particularly if a state sees itself as valuable to the US and recognizes it will not face punishment.

This speaks directly to the conditionality of foreign aid and specifically military aid. Scholars suggest that when it comes to military assistance packages, donor states often attach conditions which require recipients to meet certain expectations to ensure continued support (Boutton 2014). However, recipients must believe the threat of security aid cuts to be credible. Failure to convey credibility can lead to the ineffectiveness of contingencies. In certain cases, the willingness of donors to actually sanction recipient states may be dependent on their strategic importance. Sandholtz (2016) showed that, as a general rule, the US rarely cuts military assistance, and is even less inclined to do so if it has received military aid in the past. Echoing findings from Blanton (2000), this speaks to a ‘gatekeeping’ effect as the probability that a state will continue to receive military support in a subsequent year is over 90 percent. Thus, once a state crosses the hurdle of receiving military aid, it is unlikely such aid will stop.

Sandholtz’s (2016) findings echo earlier work which demonstrated a state’s respect for human rights (or lack thereof) rarely influenced bilateral military aid (Neumayer 2003). However, these studies relied on aggregate measures of respect for human rights such as the political terror scale (PTS) or CIRI Human Rights Data Project (Wood and Gibney, 2010; Cingranelli et al. 2014). While useful for identifying general patterns in military aid disbursements as a consequence of human rights abuses, they may often miss important micro-level forms of abuse like child soldiering that can directly impact security aid decisions. For instance, as Table 11 demonstrates, the US has restricted security assistance, in whole or in part, due to a state’s use of child soldiers. Ultimately, the willingness of a donor state to sanction a recipient state who has committed some form of political transgression is, at least in part, a
product of strategic interests of the donor (Swedlund 2016). Extending this argument, I contend that the strategic interest of a donor can be loosely captured by analyzing the historical trends in security aid disbursement to recipients. Those receiving higher levels of military aid in a previous time period—captured by the US dollar amount annually—can, in theory, be considered more strategically important. In other words, a state’s strategic value is likely to influence the provision of waivers to, or implementation of the CSPA. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: States which receive higher levels of military aid in the previous year(s) will be more likely to receive a waiver for subsequent year(s).

Given the robustness of findings in the literature which contend that human rights abuses are unlikely to impact security assistance flows particularly after states have already begun to receive aid (i.e. Blanton 2000; Sandholtz 2016), it is surprising that some states have faced reductions because of their use of child soldiers. I argue that this can largely be explained by the character of child soldiering within a state’s national army. To capture the character of child soldiering, I explore two dimensions: whether the practice is indicative of a systemic problem with professionalization and the roles in which children take on within the military.

Although data on child soldiering is inherently limited and often underreported (Haer and Böhmelt 2016; Lasley and Thyne 2015), reports which are available often offer some estimation on the numbers of children active within national militaries and non-state actors. Put differently, I explore whether child soldiering is a systemic issue within the military or if cases are rare, even inadvertent. I do this in large part based on the specific types of military aid that are eligible for sanctions. For example, IMET funding aims to professionalize states’ military leaders. Thus,
states which have severe institutional issues related to professionalization may be less likely to face full implementation of the CSPA in an attempt to influence institutional change. The process of breaking the cycle of a government’s direct use of child soldiers can be challenging and time consuming. Further, the process of demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration of former child soldiers can take years to achieve (Betancourt et al. 2010). In other words, cutting these non-lethal forms of aid might actually aggravate the issue.

Secondly, I consider the roles undertaken by child soldiers. The definition of a child soldier casts a wide net, including any person under 18 “who is serving in any capacity, including in a support role such as a cook, porter, messenger, medic, guard, or sex slave” (Public Law 110-457). While all forms of child soldiering are problematic and, by definition illegal, it is clear that children’s roles within organizations can vary significantly. Consequently, donors’ perception of the atrocity may also vary. For example, children serving in combat roles is often thought of as a more egregious violation of human rights than instances where children serve in supporting roles and/or never see active combat. To capture variation in child soldiers’ activities, I rely on anecdotal information reported in various human rights reports. My expectation suggests that the cost of supporting a state where children serve as combatants will yield different effects on the decision to restrict security assistance than cases where children are predominantly used in support roles.

Together, these assumptions suggests that the gravity of human rights violations can constrain US’ disbursement of security assistance. The Mexican government’s continuous use of torture and extrajudicial killings in 2015, for example, resulted in a proposed 15% decrease in US security assistance for the 2016 fiscal year (Siddiqui 2015). Although just a ‘drop in the bucket’ for the Mexican budget, this decision illustrates that under certain conditions the US will
not (fully) tolerate GVHRs. While child soldiering remains outside the scope of the Leahy law, and as such is not classified as a GVHR, the passing of the CSPA clearly demonstrated a shift towards expansion of its guiding principles. Thus, I contend that security assistance restrictions are more likely, as a general rule, where there are higher numbers of child soldiers, indicative of a more systemic/institutional problem, and when children take on roles in active combat.

*H2: States are more likely to face restrictions to security assistance when the child soldiering is a systemic issue (institutionalized and/or used as traditional soldier in combat roles).*

**Research Design**

To test the hypotheses and uncover new theoretical insights, I adopt a qualitative approach. Case studies allow me to trace the flow of the specific forms of US security assistance covered under the CSPA. This strategy also assists in fleshing out the theoretical mechanism that cannot be captured by large-N analyses. Specifically, I can consider temporal variation in child soldiering practices by recipient government. I supplement these case narratives with primary source material drawn from in-depth interviews conducted with representatives from the US State Department, Department of Homeland Security, congressional aides, researchers at various think-tanks, current and former military personnel, and representatives from Human Rights Watch.

Given the aim to identify conditions which lead to the presence or absence of waivers, I focused my investigation only on states that were eligible for security assistance in each year that they were designated as in violation of the CSPA. The resulting list leaves a relatively small sample from which to select (see Table 11). However, those states remaining offered the distinct
advantage of employing a most similar systems design. In total, four cases were selected: Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Rwanda and South Sudan (Table 12).

Within each case, I investigated the seven forms of security assistance outlined in the CSPA to capture a rough estimate of each state’s strategic importance (H1). I considered the aggregate dollar amount in the year(s) preceding a state’s designation on the CSPA list beginning roughly in 2008 and through 2017, with countries receiving higher levels of security assistance expected to be those most likely to receive a waiver. However, because the US has provided waivers more often than not, suggesting that most of the states hold some degree of strategic value, I focus on the specific types of waivers provided (full vs. partial).

Investigating a reduced set of cases increases my ability to gather more in depth and reliable estimates on the character of child soldiering (and numbers of child soldiers) and the ways they are utilized by states (H2). The qualitative strategy also allows me to leverage a temporal dimension as I investigate ‘snapshots’ within each case to assess fluctuations in security assistance. Through process tracing I am able to examine observable implications of the hypothesized mechanisms which can lead to variations in security aid disbursements (Bennet and Checkel 2014, 8). First, the case of South Sudan covers 2012-2017 with specific focus on the period between 2012-2014. The analysis centers on the US decision to support the Sudanese Peoples’ Liberation Movement/Army in spite of their use of child soldiers. Second, I examine the case of Chad, a country which received full waivers in each of the three years it appeared on the list (2010, 2011, and 2013). Both cases provide geographic and temporal similarities along with analogous outcomes on aid restrictions. However, South Sudan’s listing on the CSPA began as the newly established state descended into civil war. Meanwhile, Chad had just seen its five-year civil war come to an end in during its first appearance on the CSPA list in 2010. I compare
the outcomes in these states with two cases in which the US did not provide a waiver (in at least one year of the state’s listing). I first probe the case of the Central African Republic, which received no waiver in 2013 (its first appearance on the CSPA list) and then received a partial waiver in 2014 before being removed from the list. I conclude with Rwanda, examining the US decision to restrict security aid the government in 2013, remove it from the list in 2014, then grant a partial waiver when Rwanda was relisted in 2015. This case is particularly interesting as the US had enjoyed a relatively positive relationship with Kagame’s regime following his accession to power in the aftermath of 1994 genocide. In addition, Rwanda was not experiencing a civil war when it was sanctioned while the Central African Republic had slipped into conflict the year before its first listing. Together, these four case explorations yield insight into the intricacies of US security assistance decisions and human rights and highlights the conditions which increase the probability that the US credibly commits to implementation of the CSPA.

I address alternative explanations throughout the case analyses including how the global war on terror has influenced the implementation of the CSPA and how state fragility (i.e. civil conflict) may impact the disbursement of security aid. Through process tracing I am better able to systematically identify and consider these alternative explanations and move in the direction of causal inference related to the outcome of interest (Lyall 2014, 186). Relatedly, this strategy also allows for inductive theoretical insights which can increase confidence in causal explanations through within case analyses and clarifies deductive expectations (Collier 2011; Bennet and Checkel 2014, 13). I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with various members of the US State Department, the policymaking community, think-tanks, and human rights
NGOs. In selecting potential interviewees, I adopted a strategy that would offer multiple lenses through which to assess the CSPA and US implementation (or lack thereof). Policy practitioners within the Department of State provide useful insight on listing procedures, and given the Secretary of State’s role in final determinations on waivers, this provides important information about justifications. Human rights advocates/professionals assist in providing insight on child soldiering practices within each state, but also offer a critical eye pertaining to US security assistance decisions.

These interviews significantly improve the inferences that can be drawn regarding the US decision-making process with respect to states in violation of the CSPA. First, the diversity of interviewees offers significant leverage for addressing alternative explanations for why certain states are granted waivers and while others are held accountable. It also enables me to pit rival arguments (i.e. government officials vs. human rights advocates) against one another in an effort to offer a more complete picture of security assistance decisions and perceptions. In particular, conversations with those active in government offer stark contrast with members of humanitarian NGOs. This dichotomy provides additional information regarding the pressure (or lack thereof) when it comes to child soldiering and the enforcement of the CSPA.

54 Interviews were conducted in Washington D.C. and Orlando, FL. See Table 17, Appendix C for list of interviews.  
55 The US President ultimately makes the decision, but power is often devolved to the Secretary of State.
### Table 11. Overview of Theoretical Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year (Bold indicates CSPA listing)</th>
<th>Security Assistance Monitor (t-1)</th>
<th>H1 Expectation</th>
<th>Character of Child Soldiering</th>
<th>H2 Expectation</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>507,523</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>115,000</td>
<td>No Waiver</td>
<td>Systemic</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Aid Restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>23,400,000*</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Systemic</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Removed from list</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>627,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1,208,500</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Not Systemic</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>875,000</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Not Systemic</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Removed from List</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2,346,466</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Not Systemic</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Removed from list</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>859,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>731,000</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Systemic</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Aid Restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>282,000</td>
<td>No Waiver</td>
<td>Systemic</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Removed from list</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>659,000</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Not Systemic</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Removed from list</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Year (Bold indicates CSPA listing)</td>
<td>Security Assistance Monitor (t-1)</td>
<td>H1 Expectation</td>
<td>Character of Child Soldiering</td>
<td>H2 Expectation</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>39,742,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>42,633,000</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Systemic</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>52,186,913</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Systemic</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>28,179,000</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Systemic</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>42,714,000</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Systemic</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>21,000,000</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Systemic</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>31,700,000</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Systemic</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The entire amount dispersed was to train foreign troops deploying for peacekeeping missions (Security Assistance Monitor – CAR 2018)

**Independent Variable(s)**

The main explanatory variable is captured by examining child soldier usage by recipient governments. I rely primarily on the US Department of State’s annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report which provides country specific information on the use of child soldiers by governments and non-state actors (US Department of State 2018b). Following the adoption of the CSPA, the Department of State began to consistently record instances of child soldier usage by governments due to the requirement that it annually report a list of violators. However, potential bias exists when comparing with the UN Secretary General’s annual report on children in conflict (UNSG 2016a). As a result, I cross reference the TIP reports with annual reports from various organizations including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Child Soldiers International, and the United Nations.
I also use these sources to obtain estimates on the numbers of child soldiers being used and the systemic nature of the issue. While accurate data on the raw numbers of child soldiers employed by a state are unavailable, I rely on estimates as reported by humanitarian watchdogs (i.e. Child Soldiers International) to determine the level at which a government employs child soldiers. To capture the role of child soldiers in a recipient state’s military I draw from similar reports and determine if children are being used as active combatants or are utilized solely in support roles. I anticipate an increase in the probability that US restricts security assistance if the practice is more indicative of an institutional problem.

**Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable, US restrictions on security assistance, considers whether the CSPA was fully implemented (aid restricted), partially implemented (partial waiver), or not implemented (full waiver). Data on US security aid allocation (US dollars) are drawn from Security Assistance Monitor (Security Assistance Monitor 2018). By law, any country which receives over $500,000 in cumulative military or economic assistance in a given year is required to have its own annual reporting (USAID 2013). While all forms of military assistance can be tracked, I focus specifically on the seven forms of security assistance that fall under the scope of the

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56 To capture the level of child soldiering by non-state actors I rely on a similar procedure and also use data from Haer and Böhmelt (2015) who offer an ordinal measure of rebel child soldiering (none/low/high).

57 For this study I elected to rely solely on US security assistance to capture strategic value as opposed to all forms of aid. For the cases examined, the variation in security aid is generally reflective of the variation in total aid. In other words, the difference in US investment through security aid disbursements is similar to the difference in investment via all forms of assistance.
CSPA. I cross referenced data from Security Assistance Monitor with USAID’s Foreign Aid Explorer.

Before moving to case explorations, it is important to offer at least a brief discussion on limitations in the construction of the list of violators to the CSPA. After reviewing the list of states that have fallen on the list of violators of the CSPA, there are notable omissions (i.e. Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia). Reports in 2016 indicated that the Afghan government along with the Afghan national and local police have employed child soldiers in their units (UNSG 2017). In short, the list of child soldier violators demonstrates potential bias that undoubtedly merits further investigation. However, exploration of the list’s construction and development is beyond the scope of the current project’s goals. Further, and as noted previously, interviews with US State Department Officials reveal that the determinations of violators are conducted with legal counsel present in an effort to ensure those states listed are, in fact, in violation.

The Cases

South Sudan

South Sudan’s first appearance on the CSPA list in October 2012, a year after it gained independence. Following its listing, South Sudan was granted full waivers for both FY 2013 and 2014. However, having remained on the list of violators since, the country has received only partial waivers in each subsequent year (FY 2015-2018). Fifteen years prior to independence

58 As noted, PKO and PKO-OCO were not under the original CSPA of 2008, but were later added under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2013.
59 Roughly a two-year lag exists for reporting from USAID. Numbers were cross-referenced with Security Assistance Monitor, but evidence suggests that there is significant underreporting from USAID (see Security Assistance Monitor 2018).
(1996), secessionist movements within southern Sudan began receiving significant US military support. In backing the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), and more specifically, providing military support for its armed wing (the Sudan People’s Liberation Army-SPLA), the US played a significant role in the trajectory of the Sudanese civil war which ended with a comprehensive peace agreement in 2005 and the creation of an independent South Sudan six years later (LeRichie and Arnold 2013).

While it is well documented that the SPLM/A used child soldiers throughout the Sudanese civil war, the movement benefited both directly and indirectly from US military support (McCormick 2015; Lynch et al. 2016). Estimates suggest that the US provided upwards of $20 million to neighboring states including Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Uganda, in an effort to bolster the SPLM/A’s strength against al-Bashir (Dagne 2011a, 9). In the years preceding the peace agreement, support was largely driven by the SPLM/A’s commitment to stop recruiting children and to demobilize those child soldiers currently within the organization. In short, the group attempted to comply with internationally recognized norms to achieve its goal of independence (Jo 2015; Lasley and Thyne 2015). For instance, in 2001, the SPLM/A held a demobilization ceremony for some 3,500 child soldiers in its effort to garner international support (UNICEF 2001). Only later was it revealed that many were not demobilized, with upwards of 10,000 children assumed to be still active within the group (Singer 2004, 572). However, by 2010, the SPLM/A appeared to have made drastic improvements with regards to child soldiers within its ranks. Estimates of 20,000 children being demobilized illustrated a significant shift in the organization’s tactics (BBC 2010).

While South Sudan’s independence and its reported commitment to eliminate child soldiering appeared promising, the country quickly spiraled into civil war. Since this time, both
the government and rebels have used child soldiers at dramatic rates with UN estimates in December 2017 suggesting upwards of 19,000 children having been recruited by both sides since 2013 (UNICEF 2017, 2). Throughout this period South Sudan has received substantial security support from the US and upon achieving statehood, although listed in violation of the CSPA, was granted a full waiver. Meanwhile, Sudan, originally receiving a full waiver in 2010 (FY 2011), has since seen security aid fully restricted in each year that it was an eligible recipient (Stohl and Dick 2015).60 While the US-Sudanese relations have seen ebbs and flows since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1956, a military coup in 1989, Sudan’s offer of safe haven to international terrorists, and the genocidal campaign by the Janjaweed in Darfur further strained the relationship and dramatically altered the provision of US military assistance (Brown 2003; Zissis 2006).

Examining the approximate dollar amounts for those categories of security assistance covered by the CSPA, South Sudan received over $60 million between 2010 and 2011, the years preceding its listing (Security Assistance Monitor-Sudan 2018).61 For comparison, Chad received just over $800,000 in 2010, while Central African Republic saw roughly $100,000 ($60,000 earmarked for IMET). Comparatively, South Sudan received a disproportionate amount of security aid, suggesting strategic importance can overshadow a state’s violation of the CSPA (H1). However, the onset of civil conflict in late 2013 and the continued use of child soldiers have seen South Sudan’s waiver status change from full to partial.

60 This full waiver was largely in support of stabilization and peacekeeping operations (Dagne 2011b).
61 Recall that PKOs and PKO-OCO were only added in 2013.
The incorporation of children within the South Sudanese military is unequivocally a systemic issue (H2). Although accounting for only a small fraction of the total military, estimated to be around 200,000 (World Bank 2018), child recruitment has been an institutional problem since independence (HRW 2015). Further, children have undoubtedly been active participants in combat within the SPLA since the start of civil war. Interviews with 41 former child soldiers associated with government forces show that children joined the army for safety, lack of educational opportunities, even for pay (HRW 2015, 31). Within the military, children’s roles varied from cooking and washing clothes to fighting on the front lines (HRW 2015, 25). H2 suggests that children’s roles in direct hostilities should temper the willingness to grant full waivers, but South Sudan was provided full waivers for FY 2013 and 2014. However, fiscal years 2015-2018 saw only partial waivers granted. This suggests interplay between the strategic value of a state (H1) and the character of child soldiering (H2).

This interplay becomes apparent when examining the specific line items of support. Although the US stopped providing IMET funding to South Sudan between 2015-2017, the majority of security assistance provided was allocated for Peacekeeping Operations that targeted security sector reform (amounting to over $60 million between 2015-2016). Defined as “the set of policies, plans, programs, and activities that a government undertakes to improve the way it provides safety, security, and justice,” security sector reform funding generally aims to professionalize the military and civilian sectors within recipient states (US Department of State 2009). The increasing exposure of the gravity of child soldier usage by the UN, Department of

62 It is important to emphasize that South Sudan’s age, particularly that is was a brand new country, makes it a unique case. Importantly, full waivers may have been viewed as giving the new state an opportunity to comply with US expectations. However, it is important to put this in context as the SPLA/M had been the beneficiary of US security assistance prior to independence.
State, and numerous reports from organizations including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International contributed to South Sudan’s demotion to partial waivers. A State Department official suggested, “This is speculative, but my anticipation is that South Sudan has not held up its end of the bargain when it comes to [stopping] its child soldiering practices” (Interview I). This is reflected in the type of waiver South Sudan has received since 2014. The continued use of child soldiers at high levels and in direct hostilities, coupled with the government’s lack of implementation of military enlistment procedures and no criminal accountability mechanism arguably constrained the ability of the US to continue its justification of full waivers (US Department of State 2017). However, the state’s strategic value, as captured by the significant investment in security assistance in previous years, likely curtailed decisions to fully restrict security assistance. This suggests support for H1, but does not rule out the validity of H2.

While the South Sudanese case clearly lends some support for strategic importance as a key predictor for CSPA waivers, interviews with peacekeeping experts lend mixed support for H2. The shift in waiver status—from full to partial—suggests that the US decision makers were unwilling to ‘fully’ tolerate the continued systemic nature of child soldiering. Specifically, US security aid restrictions though influenced by a state’s strategic importance, may only matter to a certain point. In the case of South Sudan, child soldiers were rampant in the national army, illustrating an institutional problem. Still, the importance of South Sudan based on historical investment suggests that full implementation of the CSPA was never a viable option. “If we think about South Sudan, the fragility of a new state cannot be discounted,” and in such instances, “…it is important to try and assist in professionalizing their [armed] forces” (Interview X). Non-lethal military assistance packages, such as IMET, are specifically designed to achieve this by providing “students from allied and friendly nations valuable training and education on
U.S. military practices and standards, including exposure to democratic values and respect for internationally recognized standards of human rights” (US Department of State-IMET). From 2011 to 2014, South Sudan received approximately $2.4 million in IMET in an effort to strengthen civil military relations and professionalize its military (USAID-South Sudan 2018). This was $1 million more than both Rwanda and Chad over the same time period (CAR only received IMET training in 2010 and 2016, totaling approximately $360,000). Further, from 2011-2015 South Sudan received over $130 million earmarked for Security Sector Transformation (SST) as part of Peacekeeping Operations Funds. Specifically, these funds aimed to “support transformation of the Sudan Peoples’ Liberation Movement/Army (SPLA) to a professional, conventional force (through infrastructure support, equipment and training), in support of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)” (USAID-South Sudan 2018). The evolution of waivers in the case of South Sudan suggests that the continued employment of child soldiers in the national army can lead to states’ demotion in waiver status. In other words, lethal forms of security assistance covered by full waivers is unlikely to continue when child soldiering is an institutional issue, but waivers for non-lethal aid are likely to be granted (i.e. military professionalization).

Chad

Chad’s designation on the CSPA list in 2010 was quickly followed by the government’s signing of an action plan with the United Nations in June 2011 (Becker 2014, 605). The action plan called for UN assistance in the verification and monitoring of military installations, criminalization of child soldiering to reflect international law, measures for punitive action against violators, and other preventive measures (Office of the Special Representative of the
Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict 2011). By the following October (2012), Chad was removed from the CSPA list. After a year-long hiatus, Chad was relisted in October 2013 (FY 2014). However, in each year of listing, Chad has received a full national interest waiver.

While recent years have seen increased US spending in Chad given the country’s partnership in combating terrorism, between 2008 and 2010 (i.e. the years preceding its listing), Chad received roughly $1.7 million across the six security assistance categories covered under the CSPA. For comparison, in 2013 the Chadian National Army (ANT) received over $7 million in funding for just one category (section 1206-Train and Equip Authority).\(^{63}\) This influx in funding has largely been attributed to the ANT’s partnership with US efforts to combat Boko Haram in neighboring Nigeria. Though the total dollar amount in security assistance was relatively low in the years proceeding Chad’s first appearance on the CSPA list, its rising importance as a strategic partner for counterterrorism efforts in the region has seen a dramatic uptick in the dispersion of security assistance, most notably in the US train and equip program which alone has seen Chad receive nearly $30 million between 2013-2015 (USAID 2018).

The relatively low levels of security assistance provided to Chad in both 2009 and 2010, suggest that the full waivers given in FY2010 and 2011 do not appear to be driven by its strategic interest when only considering the dollar amount in security assistance provided. In 2009, Chad ranked 36 out of 44 African states in the Department of Defense disbursements at $224,000, $172,000 of which was provided for IMET and the remaining $52,000 given for Foreign Military

\[^{63}\text{Section 12016 grants the Secretary of Defense authority to ‘train and equip’ a foreign military to perform/assist in support of US counterterrorism efforts (Public law 109-163).}\]
Sales (USAID-Foreign Aid Explorer-Chad; Security Assistance Monitor-Chad 2018). Given the apparent lack of strategic value at the time, it is interesting to note that the US granted Chad a national interest waiver, let alone a full waiver, suggesting a lack of initial support for H1. However, the strategic interest in Chad drastically changed given the rise of Boko Haram shortly before the CSPA took effect. September 2010 saw roughly 700 inmates escape in a large prison break, coinciding with the rejuvenation of the terror group which has gone on to carry out hundreds of attacks within Nigeria and surrounding states (Cook 2011; Global Terrorism Database 2018). An interview with a former Army officer and peacekeeping expert provides additional support for this change in Chad’s strategic importance: “Chad was taking steps to improve its professionalization and other security concerns in the region meant partnerships were important” (Interview X). Thus, Chad’s strategic importance increased dramatically immediately following its listing. Once it became clear that Chad would be an important ally for counterterrorism efforts, the amount of security assistance disbursed increased exponentially. This suggests that reliance on the dollar amount of security assistance as the sole proxy for strategic importance may be too narrow and would lead to the conclusion that Chad was of minimal importance. A broader view of strategic importance (i.e. partnerships in counterterrorism) would lend support to H1.

Turning to the scope and nature of child soldiering, the ANT had been known to directly incorporate children prior to its listing. A report to the UN Security Council in February 2011 (covering 2008-2010) revealed that the ANT had employed children both in the process of former rebel integration following war and had actively recruited children (UNSG 2011, 5). In 2009 alone, the Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting in Chad identified 49 cases of child soldier recruitment by the ANT—over half of which were Sudanese refugees (UNSG 2011, 5).
By 2010 the task force identified a shift in ANT recruiting, reporting that documented cases of child soldiering which originally appeared to be systematic were becoming increasingly infrequent with only isolated cases carried out by low-ranking officers. These findings were reflective of earlier UN reports which questioned the degree of cohesion of the ANT and its level of discipline (UNSG 2007, 8). As the UN Secretary General concluded, “it casts into doubt the degree to which policy-level commitments and directives are translated into action by individual field commanders and their orders followed” (UNSG 2007, 8). In short, it suggests that child soldiering in the ANT had become more of an issue of indiscipline than an institutional problem.

During this time, the US granted full waivers to Chad. Although Chad’s strategic importance seems paramount for its full waiver status, cutting security assistance under the terms of the CSPA to the Chadian government would likely have undermined attempts to influence institutions within the state—and specifically, efforts aimed at professionalization of the military. Further, the apparent shift in behavior following designation as a violator (i.e. signing a UN action plan) illustrates that improvements in government behavior might even be rewarded by waivers and the subsequent delisting in following years.

Examining the level of child soldiering, Chad’s usage of child soldiers in terms of verified cases of recruitment decreased over time, especially when compared to South Sudan. Government efforts beginning with the 2011 action plan signaled a commitment to change recruitment behavior. A State Department official stated, “Signaling matters a lot for delisting. If states take steps in the right direction we reconsider listing them as a violator… We recognize there are reputational consequences to being listed and also understand the process of eradicating child soldiers from the [government’s] military isn’t always a fast process” (Interview VII).
While verified cases of child soldiering are not a perfect indication of the actual practices, Chad’s commitment to eradicating child soldiers in the ANT was reflected in the conclusions reached by the UN Secretary General’s 2014 report on children and armed conflict (UNSG 2014, 10-12). The UN’s general consensus suggested that the government made significant improvements in meeting all obligations aimed at demobilizing children within the ANT and was refraining from further recruitment. Between January 2013 and December 2013, no new cases of child soldiering were documented. The UN reiterated that most child soldiers in the ANT were the result of demobilized child soldiers from other armed groups being absorbed into the national military, not the result of a systematic practice by the military (UNSG 2014, 12). By all accounts, child soldier usage by the ANT was a rare practice and often the result of a lack of monitoring and screening recruits. Thus, the low numbers of child soldiers in the rank-and-file, coupled with the identification by the UN that the ANT was no longer engaged in the systematic recruitment of children lends some support for H2. This finding also suggests that listing on the CSPA and the receipt of subsequent waivers, might actually assist with institutional transformation. Though beyond the scope of the current study, this finding might qualify earlier studies that point to the existence of a moral hazard between donor and recipient.

Pertaining to the roles of child soldiers in the ANT, children were directly involved in combat during Chad’s civil war between 2005 and 2010. An interview with an ANT officer offered a glimpse into the army’s perception of children: “Child soldiers are ideal because they don’t complain, they don’t expect to be paid, and if you tell them to kill, they kill” (HRW 2007). However, the ANT’s practices during conflict—actively recruiting children to fight—and in the years following—reorienting its practices—suggest a fundamental change. Further, the incorporation of child soldiers in the ANT as a consequence of the integration of former rebels of
the United Front for Change is consequential (UNSG 2007, 8). While the Chadian government signed a peace agreement with the United Front for Change in 2006 and explicitly declined to accept children into the military who were formerly part of the United Front, the questionable discipline level of the ANT led both to its absorption of child soldiers and their subsequent employment as combatants (UNSG 2007, 8). However, following the conclusion of the civil war, there is little evidence to suggest that any children in the ANT were engaged in combat.

Overall, while the number of children within the military at Chad’s listing in 2010 was relatively low, evidence points to the fact that both a lack of oversight and strategic decision making during civil war led to the children serving as active combatants in the ANT. Given that child soldiering was less of an institutional problem post 2010 and that children were employed as active soldiers during Chad’s civil war from 2005 to 2010, expectation would suggest that at a minimum, partial waivers would be granted for FY 2011. However, the receipt of a full waiver in Chad’s first year suggests that when child soldiering is not a systemic problem, restrictions are unlikely. The draw-down of conflict in 2010 (the same year the CSPA came into effect) and the increased efforts by the Chadian government to signal commitment to demobilization of active child soldiers as early as 2007 as evidenced by the governments signing of a UNICEF protocol to protect children in conflict64 (UNSG 2007, 12), further demonstrates that shifts in government’s practices can improve prospects for the continuation of security assistance, particularly when monitoring and verification corroborate a genuine commitment. In short, in each year listed, Chad saw decreasing levels of child soldiering and no clear evidence to suggest that children in the ANT saw active combat after the civil war ended. Taken together, while the strong increase

64 In April 2008.
in Chad’s strategic value provides a robust explanation for the provision of full waivers, the shift in organizational behavior related to its child soldiering practices appears to also be a significant contributor in the waiver decision-making process.

The Central African Republic (CAR)
The Central African Republic first appeared on the CSPA list in October 2013 as reports emerged in 2012 that the government was actively supporting self-defense militias that employed child soldiers (US Department of State 2013). The civil conflict resulted from the rise of Séléka in 2012, a coalition of former rebel groups from the country’s previous civil war. An already fragile peace agreement was undone when President Bozizé, winning re-election in January 2011, was accused of reneging on the terms of peace agreements signed with the main rebel factions in 2007/08 (Mehler 2011). By late 2012, Séléka staged a series of attacks in the north, swiftly moving to the capital and overthrowing Bozizé in March 2013 (Bahr 2013). Séléka would go on to control the government for nearly a year before mounting pressure resulted in the resignation of Séléka leader Michel Djotodia in January 2014 (Lombard and Batianga-Kinzi 2014).

CAR stands in contrast to the case of Chad as its two-year stint on the CSPA list occurred in the midst of violent civil war. While the Séléka rebel coalition was consistently condemned for its use of child soldiers, pro-government self-defense militias—termed “anti-Balaka”—were also implicated in the use of child soldiers during the conflict. These militias were used by Bozizé as auxiliaries to the army (Child Soldiers International 2016).

Turning to the strategic value of the Central African Republic (H1), the country has consistently ranked in the bottom third of African states in the total dollar amount of US security
assistance outlined under the CSPA (USAID-Foreign Aid Explorer-Central African Republic). For instance, in FY 2012, the year prior to its listing, CAR received no more than $115,000 to support IMET although verification of whether this funding was actually provided is inconsistent (Security Assistance Monitor – CAR 2018). With the lack of security assistance given to the government in the previous year(s), it is unsurprising that the CSPA was fully implemented. Coupled with the volatility in the state, descending into civil war, the cost of cutting security assistance to CAR was minimal.

A senior official at Human Rights Watch explained, “The Central African Republic often gets lost in the mix…neighboring states like South Sudan, the DRC, and Chad each have drawn significant attention from the US in terms of security investment” (Interview XI). This was also reflected during an interview with an official at the Bureau of Democracy, Labor, and Human Rights in the US State Department who claimed, “If we decide to cut assistance, we give up potential leverage in a country and jeopardize relationships. In CAR during this time period, the lack of stability in the government made for a more universally accepted decision to not provide a waiver” (Interview VII). Not surprisingly, CAR has historically been seen as less strategically important in comparison to its neighbors both in terms of security aid disbursements and in terms of military partnerships. This is further complicated by its trajectory towards civil war and the subsequent overthrow of its president in early 2013. Given these complexities, it is still plausible that its lack of strategic value, as illustrated by the low amount of security assistance disbursed in 2012, significantly contributed to the US willingness to fully implement the CSPA. In addition, little opportunity existed to invoke the national interest waiver under the CSPA given the lack of a stable government and ongoing civil war, a conflict that would witness a rebel organization overthrow the government.
Shifting to the incorporation of children by the Central African Republic army, it is clear that while the government had been accused of child soldiering in past conflicts, its support of self-defense units battling the Séléka coalition was the reason for listing in 2013. A 2009 annual report of the UN Security Council’s Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict claimed that while the government had worked to eliminate the inclusion of child soldiers within the ranks of the national military, it had continued to support these self-defense militias that included children (UNSC-Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict 2009). Thus, institutional norms within the national army were not the apparent issue. Instead, CAR’s willingness to tolerate and support ‘bad behavior’ by self-defense units, coupled with an already dismal amount of security assistance in previous years, seemed to only increase the likelihood it would face full CSPA implementation.

This brings two important points to light. First, given that child soldiering was not identified as an institutional issue within the national army, one would expect that some form of a waiver would be likely (H2). However, the lack of strategic value (H1) seems to be a stronger explanation for full implementation of the CSPA. Secondly, although the national army was not identified as using child soldiers, the reports of government-backed militias actively engaged in child soldiering seem to suggest that ‘where’ children are present can matter for security aid restrictions. Recalling that a state is in violation of the CSPA if supporting non-state actors that use child soldiers, the case of CAR illustrates that if a government backs rebel organizations that use children, it may be more likely to face full security restrictions than cases where children occupy positions in the national army. Put differently, the notion that the practice of child soldiering could be remedied with the provision of non-lethal aid (aimed at professionalization) is not justifiable.
The full security assistance restrictions in 2014 were followed by President Obama’s determination to provide CAR with a partial waiver for IMET training in FY 2015 (White House Office of the Press Secretary 2014). The establishment of a transitional government headed by Catherine Samba-Panza, along with commitments to demobilize child soldiers active on all sides of the conflict, led to a shift in CAR’s waiver status. A State Department official claimed that, “[Samba-Panza] taking power was a window of opportunity so giving CAR a waiver was at least partly a strategic attempt to help stabilize [the country]” (Interview VII). Thus, the stated provision of non-lethal security assistance aimed at military professionalization and institutional change appeared to be done with the intent of assisting a transitioning regime overcome challenges in a post-conflict environment rather than specifically addressing institutional problems related to child soldiering. Since it was granted the waiver for FY 2015, CAR has not reappeared on the CSPA list.

The character of child soldiering in CAR appears to have varied significantly during its listing period. Estimates suggest that upwards of 10,000 child soldiers were active participants in the civil war from 2012-2014, having been employed as combatants, human shields, spies, and for sexual purposes. A 2014 UNICEF report noted that the number of child soldiers surged as a consequence of the deteriorating situation within the country in late 2012 and early 2013, attributing much of the recruitment of children to the anti-Balaka units (UNICEF 2014). Further, in this case, children were clearly involved as combatants with reports suggesting that children within anti-Balaka militias were manning checkpoints, being trained in handling weapons and combat, with many were reportedly killed in clashes with Séléka forces (UNSG 2016b). In short, children served in all roles within armed groups. As expected, when children are being employed as active combatants, security aid restrictions are more likely given the nature of participation. In
the case of CAR, the gravity of the human rights violations and specifically the fact that children were actively dying in conflict contributed to the US decision to fully cut security assistance in 2014. The prospect of cutting security aid is a “balancing act and in the case of CAR, the situation had deteriorated to the point where few options were left” (State Department - Interview VII). The state’s receipt of a partial waiver for non-lethal security aid in 2015 speaks to the importance of considering the character of child soldiering.

Overall, the case of the Central African Republic is complex, depicting the myriad of factors which can contribute to the full implementation of the CSPA. Though lending some support for a state’s strategic value (H1) and character of child soldiering (H2) as important factors in the restriction of security aid, the instability and lack of a clear ruling government cannot be understated as they likely impacted security assistance decisions. In other words, the country went through three different leaders between 2013 and 2014, including the overthrow of the Bozizé government by a rebel organization and increasing levels of sectarian violence that jeopardized any chance for a successful transitional government. However, this case also uncovers a novel theoretical insight, pointing to the importance of examining where child soldiers operate (within or outside of the national army) and illustrating how attention to such factors can help predict US decisions pertaining to waivers and security restrictions under the CSPA.

**Rwanda**

Rwanda has appeared on the CSPA list three times. The first appearance came in 2013 and Rwanda faced full restrictions in FY 2014. The following year, Rwanda was again listed but received a full waiver. Most recently, the government’s implication for child soldiering in 2016
has led to its relisting, but was only granted a partial waiver for FY 2017. Given these patterns, Rwanda is a particularly interesting case as it has experienced all three variations in the degree of implementation of the CSPA—no waiver, partial waiver, and full waiver.

Turning first to Rwanda’s strategic importance (H1), US security assistance to Rwanda since the establishment of the CSPA has been relatively low. This is not to say that the country fully lacks strategic importance, but does suggest that the US has been less robust in the provision of security assistance (Security Assistance Monitor-Rwanda 2018). Part of this might be attributed to its size, and specifically the size of its military (with a 2009 estimate suggesting around 35,000 soldiers) (Beswick 2014). In addition, Rwanda’s perceived improvement following the 1994 genocide has often led to the conclusion that its security sector transformation is an overwhelming success story, with accolades for being one of the top providers of female soldiers to UN peacekeeping missions. UN officials called Rwanda “a model country when it comes to professional peacekeeping missions, systematic demobilization of soldiers, and reconciliation processes” (Beswick 2014, 220).65

Between 2011 and 2013 (the three years preceding its listing), Rwanda received approximately $1.4 million in IMET funding to train roughly 35 soldiers, $300,000 in FMF, and $200,000 in FMS (Security Assistance Monitor-Rwanda 2018; USAID Foreign Aid Explorer – Rwanda). However, in late 2013 amongst reports from both the State Department and UN, Rwanda was condemned for its support of the Mouvement Du 23 Mars (M23) rebels operating in

65 It is important to note the complexity of Rwanda post-1994. Although it has seen a dramatic change in professionalization of its military, it is important to recognize the intricacy of how such professionalization was achieved, especially given the authoritarian nature of the government.
the Congo. This coincided with US decisions to fully implement the CSPA. Thus, Kagame’s regime would not benefit from US security assistance in FY 2014. Given the limited security assistance in previous years, it is not entirely surprising that the US fully restricted security assistance (H1). The restrictions would only see Rwanda miss out on approximately $2 million in security assistance. However, when one considers that Rwanda had been a pivotal contributor to peacekeeping operations—contributing the highest percentage of troops per capita since 2004—the state’s strategic importance to the broader security of the region is not insignificant. Still the full implementation appears to be consistent with the theoretical expectations evoking the importance of strategic value.

Examining the character of child soldiering, the Rwandan case draws similarities to the Central African Republic. Specifically, the support of a non-state actor using child soldiers, not the government’s direct employment of children, seem to have been a significant factor in the US decision to fully restrict security assistance. Rwanda’s listing was directly attributed to the country’s support of the M23, operating across the border in the DRC. The M23, an ethnically Tutsi organization, gained notoriety for mass atrocities within the DRC including the employment of many child soldiers, targeting civilians in conflict, and widespread rape—in one infamous case raping an eight-year-old girl (UNSC-Committee concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo 2014). The group was primarily comprised of former members of the Congolese military who deserted following an army mutiny in 2012 (BBC 2013). The

66 This point speaks directly to the question of Rwanda’s strategic value. Although accounting for monetary assistance can offer insight into its perceived value, the government’s behavior, particularly in its incongruence with US policy objectives, resulted in a shift in US policy toward Rwanda. The government’s involvement in the war in Congo, which directly challenged US policy objectives, likely influenced security aid decisions and the state’s strategic value.
organization was largely suspected of being supported by Kagame’s regime both within the DRC, but also within Rwanda where they were granted sanctuary for recruitment and training with evidence showing that the Rwandan Defense Forces were actively engaged in training new M23 recruits and even returning M23 deserters, including children (US Department of State 2014). Rwanda’s support in the form of sanctuary is an important point, as the text of the CSPA suggests that states are only in violation if supporting non-state actors operating within its own borders (Public Law 110-457). A State Department official claimed: “The government’s support of the M23 within the territorial confines of Rwanda are what ultimately got them listed [in violation of the CSPA] in the first place. If Kagame [Rwanda] only supports the M23 within Congo, then legally there was no ability to list them in violation [of the CSPA]” (State Department Interview VII).

The Rwandan government’s support of the M23, rather than its direct inclusion of children in their national military, suggests that full security restrictions were likely. “Going after the M23 directly was not an option from a US standpoint, but the CSPA allowed us to go after them indirectly by holding Rwanda accountable” (Department of Homeland Security – Interview VIII). As in the earlier case of CAR, full implementation of the CSPA has occurred when governments are indirectly involved in the use of child soldiers and the US cannot justify even non-lethal support which targets military professionalization and security sector reform. While cutting aid to a Rwandan government directly employing child soldiers would have likely be counterproductive (jeopardizing the opportunity to assist in professionalization of the military), cutting aid to a regime supporting a rebel group was universally accepted (State Department – Interview VII).
An important consideration qualifying the degree of support for the proposed hypotheses is the UN’s involvement in the DRC, specifically the international efforts taken to combat the M23. Concerns over M23’s increasing violence heightened demands for UN intervention. The result was the employment of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) as part of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission of the DRC (MONUSCO) (UNSC 2013). The FIB was authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 2098 and tasked with carrying out operations targeted specifically at defeating the M23 (Kok 2013, 178). The decision was unanimously passed by the Security Council, leading to a paradox for the US. As a permanent member of the UNSC, it became impractical to continue to provide security assistance to Rwanda. Thus, the UN’s involvement adds a moderating factor to the strength of the hypotheses and points to yet another novel theoretical factor for CSPA implementation—the importance of international organizations.

Rwanda was relisted on the CSPA in 2014 largely a consequence of their support of the M23 rebels. However, the presidential determination issued in September 2014 granted a full waiver to the Rwandan government, making the state eligible for all categories of security assistance in FY 2015. As the TIP Report of 2014 noted, the Rwandan government “refrained from reinforcing the M23 during final combat operations against the group and Rwandan support…ceased following the group’s [M23] defeat” (US Department of State 2014). Thus, while the CSPA alone did not lead to Rwanda’s compliance, the penalty incurred and its designation as a violator appeared to have some effect on its shift in behavior. Interestingly, the full waivers granted for FY 2015 appear to be the result of no documented evidence that Rwanda was still actively engaged in support of the M23 nor was the government reported to have
engaged directly in child soldering throughout 2014.\(^67\) Subsequently, Rwanda was removed from the CSPA list in 2015.

However, the delisting ‘success story’ was short-lived as Rwanda was relisted in October 2016. The 2016 TIP report claimed that Rwandan security forces “reportedly facilitated or tolerated the recruitment activity [of refugees, including children]” and officials “threatened, intimidated, harassed, and physically assaulted those who refused recruitment attempts” (US Department of State 2016). Although relisted, Rwanda was granted a partial waiver “to allow for the provision of IMET, PKO assistance, and non-lethal Excess Defense Articles for humanitarian and peacekeeping purposes, to the extent such assistance or support would be restricted by the CSPA” (White House Office of the Press Secretary 2016). Given the violations which landed Rwanda back on the CSPA list in 2016—specifically that the fact that Rwandan military officials were implicated in the recruitment of child soldiers—the direct involvement of the military in the recruitment of children, signaled a potential institutional issue. Cutting non-lethal forms of security assistance (i.e. IMET) would seem to undermine the intent of the CSPA’s goal of eliminating child soldiering by recipient states. Taken together, this case illustrates the mechanism by which ‘indirect’ child soldiering can increase the probability of full CSPA implementation while ‘direct’ involvement in child soldiering increases the likelihood of partial implementation (restrictions on non-lethal security aid).

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\(^67\) Although being listed in violation, this can generally be thought of as a byproduct of peculiarities in the timing of the listing. For instance, although the CSPA list is not announced until October, the determination is based off of TIP reports that only cover the April of the previous year through March of the year of listing. For this case, Rwanda’s designation in 2014 was a consequence of the TIP report which covered March 2013-April 2014.
Discussion and Implications

This paper sought to explore the conditions that lead to the full, partial, or lack of implementation of the Child Soldier Prevention Act. The findings suggest this process is complex, but generally illustrate support for the main hypotheses. First, a state’s strategic importance appears to be a robust indicator for when a state is likely to receive some form of waiver. Higher levels of security assistance in previous time periods appear to significantly increase the likelihood that a violator will receive a CSPA waiver. However, the variation in types of waivers suggests that there are additional factors that can impact US decisions to provide or withhold security assistance. In line with the theoretical expectations, after considering a state’s strategic value, the character of child soldiering helps explain variation in CSPA implementation. States where child soldiering is a systemic problem are likely to face security restrictions, but only on lethal forms of aid. In other words, if child soldiering is an institutional problem, violators are more likely to be recipients of a partial waiver.
### Table 12. Summary of Hypotheses and Inductive Insights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>H1 Expectation</th>
<th>H2 Expectation</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Review of Hypotheses</th>
<th>Additional Insights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>No Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Aid Restricted</td>
<td>H1 supported</td>
<td>Illustrates the importance of where child soldiers operate (within or outside of the national army). Supporting non-state actors that use child soldiers increases the chances of CSPA security aid restrictions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>H2 supported</td>
<td>Highlights how the expansion of strategic importance as captured by counterterrorism cooperation can help explain security assistance waivers to the CSPA. In addition, the case illustrates how genuine shifts in behavior can increase prospects for full waivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>H2 supported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>H2 supported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>H2 supported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Aid Restricted</td>
<td>H1/H2 not supported</td>
<td>Illustrates the importance of where child soldiers operate (within or outside of national army) for security aid restrictions. Findings also suggest the importance of considering the role of international organizations in involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>No Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>H1/H2 not supported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>H1 supported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>H1 supported</td>
<td>Strategic importance can only help violators overcome security aid restrictions to a certain point. Continued violations and the character of child soldiering then assists in explaining the type of CSPA waiver granted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>H1 Supported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>H2 supported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>H2 supported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>H2 supported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Full Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>Partial Waiver</td>
<td>H2 supported</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The entire amount dispersed was to train foreign troops deploying for peacekeeping missions (Security Assistance Monitor – CAR 2018)
Together, this study offers at least three novel contributions to the literatures on the relationship between human rights violations, aid disbursements, and child soldiering. First, it demonstrates how strategic interests, can limit the effectiveness of human rights enforcement mechanisms by donor states. This offers substantial support for the strategic value hypothesis (i.e. once a state begins receiving aid, it is unlikely that it will stop receiving assistance in subsequent years). While human rights abuses by foreign governments have factored into decisions on the distribution of certain forms of security assistance, US security assistance in previous years is consequential. One important exception is the case of Chad. If only examining spending in previous years, one would have anticipated full implementation of the CSPA. As the case narrative illustrated, strategic importance was dramatically altered during Chad’s first year of listing as it became a pivotal partner in combating terrorism in the region. Further, spending on security assistance grew exponentially in the years that followed, and unsurprisingly, Chad continued to benefit from full waivers before ultimately being delisted.

Second, and surprisingly, this study found that governments that directly employ child soldiers are less likely to see full security aid restrictions when compared to those governments that are listed as a result of their support of non-state actors who employ children. Although counterintuitive, this finding suggests that cutting non-lethal forms of security assistance to states that directly employ children in their national militaries can ultimately undermine the intent of the CSPA. While security assistance restrictions serve the purpose of incentivizing recipient states not to engage in child soldiering, certain forms of the aid covered can be pivotal for states’ military professionalization. In turn, this can change institutional deficits, leading to the cessation of child soldiering in national militaries. On the other hand, states that support non-state actors who use child soldiers, but forego direct use, may be more responsive to security assistance
restrictions as the cost of compliance is comparably low. This can also happen quickly relative to the reorientation and professionalization required to systematically change a government’s military recruitment practices. Put differently, if these states simply refrain from providing support to non-state armed groups, they increase the likelihood of receiving security assistance and being removed from the list of violators.

Third, this paper provides improved measure of child soldiering which have largely been overlooked in extant literature: the level of child soldier usage and the roles of child soldiers over time. While concrete numbers of child soldiers are non-precise, what they do provide is meaningful insight into the gravity of the practice. This helps to identify whether a practice is systematic or more fortuitous in nature and how it fluctuates across different time periods. Further, children often undertake diverse roles within militaries and non-state actors. This paper shows that their experiences within these organization can contribute to US decisions on security restrictions. Taken together, replacing the traditional binary indicator that has been the standard in a majority of child soldiering literature with a more diverse set of measurements which captures the gravity of the abuse provides an improved understanding of the factors which may lead to punishment.

At a broader level, this paper speaks to the tensions between states’ interests and norms in foreign policy decision-making. The US, through multiple pieces of legislation, has rhetorically invoked the importance of human rights records for decisions on security assistance. However, as this paper has shown, a clear paradox exists between strategy and norms as full implementation of the CSPA rests heavily on the strategic importance of recipient states. Recent reports of Saudi Arabia’s employment of child soldiers of Sudanese decent in their efforts in Yemen elucidate this paradox (Kirkpatrick 2018). Having negotiated a reported $110 billion
arms deal with Saudi Arabia, President Trump is unlikely to revoke the agreement on the basis of the Saudi regime’s child soldiering practices. Irrespective of whether Saudi Arabia is technically in violation of the CSPA, the strategic value, as illustrated in this project, is paramount. Although this realist perspective appears to prevail in the majority of cases discussed, this paper also has shown that human rights can matter for degree of US security assistance when states are both directly and indirectly involved in child soldiering and when the problem is systemic.

Though the current study focuses exclusively on the conditions leading to the variance in implementation, future work should use this as a foundation to more critically assess the CSPA and its effectiveness in actually curtailing government child soldiering. While some preliminary evidence in the case narratives of this paper suggest certain governments (i.e. Rwanda, Chad) might be persuaded to rethink their behavior, scholars should work to understand how state leaders within foreign governments respond to threats to security assistance due to the CSPA and other targeted human rights legislation. Such research would generate significant insights both for human rights advocates and policy analysts.
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USAID-Foreign Aid Explorer-Rwanda. USAID. Available online: https://explorer.usaid.gov/query?country_name=Rwanda&fiscal_year=2016&transaction_type_name=Obligations.


206

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation aimed to explore four questions related to the topic of child soldiering. First, it investigated the effect of foreign state sponsors on rebels’ proclivity to include child soldiers in their insurgencies. In doing so, it argued and showed that simply considering the presence or absence of foreign state support only tells a partial story about the effect of external support on rebel recruitment. Specifically, it emphasized the need to consider donor states’ characteristics in shaping rebel behavior. Proposing a theory of a democratic constraining effect, the statistical tests illustrated a probable association between the percentage of democratic donor states and the likelihood that rebel groups will use child soldiers. In other words, rebels that rely on support from states that are more likely to care about human rights abuses are less likely to have children in their rank and final. Qualitative investigations of the PKK in Turkey and PYD in Syria bolster these findings while providing a more nuanced perspective on the interaction between donor states and rebel groups. Specifically, the case of the PYD shows that rebels may actually monitor donors’ perceptions of their behavior and shift their recruitment practices in an effort to retain support.

Next, the dissertation explored plausible explanations for rebels’ preferences for certain members, specifically asking why groups may be more likely to employ children in the absence of women. Reexamining theories which suggest societal gender inequalities and group ideology, can constrain women’s mobility into rebellion, this project illustrated the complexities of rebels’ internal dynamics related to recruitment. Descriptive analyses revealed that women are rarely present in rebellion in the absence of children (both girls and boys). Further, the vast majority of
groups that include children and women espouse ideological foundations that are ethnically/nationally motivated. Importantly, Islamist groups are least likely to employ women, but all else equal, appear to recruit children at similar rates to their non-Islamist counterparts. Lastly, it emphasized that child soldiers are present in over 15 percent of rebellions when women are excluded. After accounting for Islamist ideology the percentage of groups drops to approximately 10, but still points to something potentially unique about these organizations and their preference for child soldiers. Examining the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad and the Kosovo Liberation Army in the former Yugoslavia, the paper demonstrates that societal gender inequalities, societal perceptions of masculinity, preservation of patriarchal relations, the normalcy of child soldiers in pre-war society, and strategic calculations during conflict can each assist in identifying when child soldiers are more likely to be selected over women.

Chapter four offered a within case exploration of child recruitment practices in the PKK. This project provided a novel contribution to the literature on child soldiering as most studies fail to consider when child recruitment begins and how patterns of recruitment vary over time. Leveraging a unique dataset on Kurdish militants, this chapter showed that child recruitment into the PKK began even before the organization’s official founding. Fragmentation of Kurdish organizations and the competitive environment in with the PKK emerged necessitated the inclusion of a diverse set of recruits. Turning away potential members due to their age would have limited the pool of recruits and jeopardized the durability and longevity of the group. Insights into the recruitment behavior of a rival Kurdish organization, the KUK, bolster these findings as the KUK also recruited children, but at a lower rate. In addition, the lack of firmly established international norm against child soldiering illustrates why the PKK first recruited children and lacked a genuine incentive to comply. Evolving conflict dynamics, most notably the
indiscriminate counterinsurgency efforts of the Turkish government, ultimately backfired as the PKK saw an influx of recruits at the height of the conflict and decreased barriers to entry to accommodate new recruits. The post-1999 period saw significant shifts in the PKK’s rate of child recruitment and opportunities for peace and prospects for increased Kurdish autonomy within and outside of Turkey motivated the group’s decision to sign the Geneva Call to refrain from recruiting child soldiers. However, I discovered that the commitment was dubious as the PKK drastically altered its recording behavior; no longer systematically providing information on the age of new recruits. Nevertheless, this discovery suggests that certain insurgent groups (i.e. secessionist rebellions) are aware of the evolution and strengthening of international norms and recognize the benefits in signaling compliance.

In chapter five, the dissertation reoriented focus from rebel child soldiering to state child recruitment. It explored the consequences states may face for child soldiering. In doing so, this chapter investigated the conditions that are most likely to lead to the implementation of the Child Soldier Prevention Act, a relatively new mechanism that, in theory, constrains the United States ability to provide security assistance to governments that still recruit child soldiers. First, it argued and showed that a state’s strategic value appears to be paramount in identifying when security assistance is likely to be restricted. However, it also argued that variation in the degree of implementation might better be explained by considering the character of child soldiering across violating states. Specifically, it showed that when child soldiering is an institutional problem, governments are most likely to see restrictions on lethal aid. At the same time, when child soldiering appears to be more inadvertent (non-systemic), states are less likely to face security restrictions if they are viewed as strategically valuable. An unexpected finding also emerged. Case evidence from Rwanda and the Central African Republic suggests that when a
state supports non-state armed groups that recruit and use child soldiers, they appear most likely to face full security assistance restrictions. Inductively, I argued that because child recruitment was not technically an institutionalized problem, and one that could be overcome the relative ease, these states were more likely to face accountability. Put differently, less was required for these states to achieve compliance with the CSPA. Taken together, this chapter accentuates the competition between the US strategic interests and policy advancements and the promotion of international human rights norms.

Moving forward, it is imperative that researchers engage critically with past investigations on the determinants of child soldiering, how and why recruitment patterns vary over time across groups, and the consequences of child recruitment, not only for violators, but for the children that are recruited. The results of this dissertation underscore the importance of, and need for, such efforts. First, and with data limitations aside, it is clear that scholarly understanding of the causes of rebel child soldiering are multifaceted and in-depth investigations on specific organizations will help illuminate the casual mechanisms at work. For instance, the in-depth exploration of the PKK in chapter four challenges many earlier studies about rebel groups’ initial decision to recruit children and qualifies others about the effects of conflict dynamics on recruitment practices. Secondly, while scholars continue to embark on important research examining the recruitment of different populations independently, more work is necessary to understand the diversity of recruits that are often recruited or absorbed by rebel groups. Third, this dissertation challenges scholars to more fully investigate governments’ human rights abuses and the implications for security assistance. At the macro-level scholars have repeatedly noted that human rights do little to influence security assistance decisions, yet as
chapter five demonstrated, micro-level investigations into specific human rights violations can tell a different story.

To conclude, it is important that the discussion return to the motivating topic of this dissertation, child soldiers. Ongoing conflicts in Yemen, South Sudan, and Syria represent just a few cases that have seen children put in precarious conditions as soldiers, directly engaged as fighters, and often forced to kill or be killed. To borrow from the mission statement of the recently closed humanitarian NGO, Child Soldiers International, “no child should ever be recruited for war” (Child Soldiers International 2019). The continued use of children as direct participants in conflict is not only an archaic practice and morally reprehensible, but should remain at the forefront of the international human rights regime until children’s inclusion in war as soldiers becomes an exception rather than the norm. This is not much to ask and children who must bear witness to conflict deserve heroic efforts by the international community to work towards the complete eradication of their recruitment into rebel groups and government militaries. As scholars continue to seek answers to the causes and consequences of child soldiering, it is pivotal that researchers remember the reasons they study this topic. True success will only be found when the topic of child soldiering is no longer an area of research; not because we know all of the answers, but because children are no longer used as soldiers.
APPENDIX A: CHAPTER TWO ROBUSTNESS CHECKS
To assess potential multicollinearity, variance inflation factors (VIF) for each variable across each model were calculated. Table 13 reports these results. On average, the VIF is well below 5 (O’brien, 2007), indicating that the models do not suffer from multicollinearity.

**Table 13. Variance Inflation Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Mean VIF</th>
<th>Variable with the highest VIF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>Average GDP per capita (2.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>Average GDP per capita (2.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>Average GDP per capita (2.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 4</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>Average GDP per capita (2.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 5</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>Average GDP per capita (2.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 6</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>Average GDP per capita (3.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 7</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>Average GDP per capita (2.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 8</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>Average GDP per capita (2.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 9</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>Average GDP per capita (2.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 10</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>Average GDP per capita (2.72)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 reports bivariate models which focus solely on the relationship between the main variables of interest, *External State Sponsorship* (binary, *Donor Group Polity2 Average*, and *Percent Democratic* and the level of child recruitment (ordinal measure).

**Table 14. Bivariate Models**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bivariate model Foreign Support</th>
<th>Bivariate model Donor Polity Avg</th>
<th>Bivariate model Percent Democratic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External State Sponsorship</td>
<td>0.960***</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.25477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(binary)</td>
<td>(0.240)</td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.487)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor Group Polity2 Average</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.728</td>
<td>-1.774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.239)</td>
<td>(0.246)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Democratic</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.726***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.186)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut1</td>
<td>-0.726***</td>
<td>-1.728</td>
<td>-1.774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.186)</td>
<td>(0.239)</td>
<td>(0.246)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut2</td>
<td>2.257***</td>
<td>1.317</td>
<td>1.276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.277)</td>
<td>(0.212)</td>
<td>(0.215)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bivariate model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bivariate model</th>
<th>Bivariate model</th>
<th>Bivariate model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign Support</td>
<td>Donor Polity Avg</td>
<td>Percent Democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi²</td>
<td>13.76</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log pseudolikelihood</td>
<td>-273.49</td>
<td>-136.86</td>
<td>-136.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseuo-R²</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Reduced form models

Table 15 reports reduced form models from the main text using the ordinal dependent variable. Models 6 and 10 are reported in this table in reduced form, excluding supply side variables like IDPs and Refugees and the demand side variable Rebel Strength. Results are reflective of those reported in the tables in the main text.

**Table 15. Reduced Form Models**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 6</th>
<th>Model 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Democratic</td>
<td>-1.726** (0.693)</td>
<td>-2.408*** (-0.778)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total HROs (ln)</td>
<td>0.349** (-0.156)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-sided Violence</td>
<td>0.000799** (0.000356)</td>
<td>0.000675** (-0.00028)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secessionist Conflict</td>
<td>1.068** (0.541)</td>
<td>1.282** (-0.554)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Unemployment (ln)</td>
<td>-1.374*** (0.435)</td>
<td>-1.400*** (-0.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita (ln)</td>
<td>0.0750 (0.220)</td>
<td>0.0845 (-0.222)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (ln)</td>
<td>0.317* (0.186)</td>
<td>0.336* (-0.187)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength Central</td>
<td>-0.669* (0.370)</td>
<td>-0.738* (-0.377)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Intensity</td>
<td>0.848* (0.485)</td>
<td>0.776 (-0.486)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Duration</td>
<td>0.0457 (0.193)</td>
<td>0.0816 (-0.199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut1</td>
<td>0.654</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 6</td>
<td>Model 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant cut2</td>
<td>(3.313)</td>
<td>(-3.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.629</td>
<td>5.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.349)</td>
<td>(-3.389)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R2</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>0.224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LogLik</td>
<td>-92.86</td>
<td>-90.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chi-square</td>
<td>46.92</td>
<td>52.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>probchi2</td>
<td>4.07e-07</td>
<td>1.13E-07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
APPENDIX B: PKK STATISTICS
Table 16. Statistics on PKK recruits Pre-1984-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment period</th>
<th>Total recruits</th>
<th>Average age</th>
<th>Recruits &lt;=17</th>
<th>Recruits &lt;=15</th>
<th>Boys &lt;=17</th>
<th>Girls &lt;=17</th>
<th>Total Child</th>
<th>Soldier Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-1984</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-1989</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1994</td>
<td>3,654</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1,130</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>310</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1999</td>
<td>1,568</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2004</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2012</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2016</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1,716</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For the unknown recruitment period, the average age is based only off of one recruit. Data on child soldiers in the unknown recruitment period comes from these individuals reported age at death which was <=17.
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEWEES
**Table 17. List of Interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I*</td>
<td>US Department of State</td>
<td>6 March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II*</td>
<td>US Institute of Peace</td>
<td>7 March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III*</td>
<td>Hoover Institute</td>
<td>7 March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV*</td>
<td>Stimson Center</td>
<td>7 March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V*</td>
<td>US House of Representatives - Aide</td>
<td>7 March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI*</td>
<td>Council on Foreign Relations</td>
<td>8 March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII*</td>
<td>US Department of State</td>
<td>8 March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII*</td>
<td>US Department of Homeland Security</td>
<td>8 March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX*</td>
<td>US Department of Homeland Security</td>
<td>8 March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X**</td>
<td>Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI)</td>
<td>20 March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI**</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
<td>20 March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII**</td>
<td>Enough Project</td>
<td>30 March 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Face to Face; ** Virtual
APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL LETTERS
Approval of Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138
To: Christopher Faulkner
Date: February 12, 2018

Dear Researcher:

On 02/12/2018 the IRB approved the following human participant research until 02/11/2019 inclusive:

Type of Review: UCF Initial Review Submission Form
                        Expedited Review Category #6 & 7
Project Title: Exploring the Child Soldier Prevention Act
Investigator: Christopher Faulkner
IRB Number: SBE-18-13779
Funding Agency: Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

The scientific merit of the research was considered during the IRB review. The Continuing Review Application must be submitted 30 days prior to the expiration date for studies that were previously expedited, and 60 days prior to the expiration date for research that was previously reviewed at a convened meeting. Do not make changes to the study (i.e., protocol, methodology, consent form, personnel, site, etc.) before obtaining IRB approval. A Modification Form cannot be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at https://iris.research.ucf.edu.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 02/11/2019, approval of this research expires on that date. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in IRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. The new form supersedes all previous versions, which are now invalid for further use. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Participants or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

All data, including signed consent forms if applicable, must be retained and secured per protocol for a minimum of five years (six if HIPAA applies) past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained and secured per protocol. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

This letter is signed by:

[Signature]

Page 1 of 2
February 14, 2019

Dear Christopher Faulkner:

On 2/14/2019, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Review:</th>
<th>Modification and Continuing Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>Exploring the Child Soldier Prevention Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigator:</td>
<td>Christopher Faulkner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB ID:</td>
<td>MODCR0000033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant ID:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IND, IDE, or HDE:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents Reviewed:</td>
<td>• Informed Consent Revisions.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • IRB Protocol_Faulkner, Category: IRB Protocol; • Interview Questions Template, Category: Recruitment Materials;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The IRB approved the protocol from 2/14/2019 to 2/13/2020. NOTE: Because this study was not approved before the IRB expiration date, there was a lapse in IRB approval from 02/11/2019 to the new approval date.

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or irb@ucf.edu. Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Renea Carver
Designated Reviewer