Raising Rebels

Participation and Recruitment in Civil War

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Abstract
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Why do some individuals choose to participate in rebellion, and what recruitment tactics can rebel groups use to affect this decision? These questions are central to the study of civil war because rebel groups must raise troops in order to challenge the government and to survive as an organization. Indeed, much of the civil war literature builds on participation as a key causal mechanism, yet it is rarely specified in theoretical or empirical models. The dissertation attempts to open this black box by tackling three sets of gaps in the existing literature; these relate to the assumptions made in most studies, the theoretical bases for understanding participation and recruitment, and the record of empirical testing. Essay I examines whether a particular type of recruitment practice, ethnic mobilization, is associated with higher levels of violence. The results show that when rebel groups mobilize along ethnic lines, there is a higher risk for intensified violence. Essay II employs new data on rebel troop size to study what factors affect participation in rebellion. The findings indicate that concerns over personal security rather than economic and social incentives best explain participation. Essay III addresses coerced recruitment, positing that conflict dynamics affect whether rebel groups shift from voluntary to coerced recruitment. Using micro-level data on the conflict in Nepal, the results show that the more losses rebels suffer on the battlefield, the greater the number of individuals they subsequently abduct. Finally, the Nepal case study presented in Essay IV suggests that indoctrination as a recruitment strategy was more important to rebel leaders than other facets of the insurgency. Taken together, this dissertation indicates that there is analytical leverage to be had by examining not only the individual's decision to participate, but also the rebel group's recruitment strategy, and that these rebel strategies are flexible and contingent on conflict dynamics.

Keywords: civil conflict, civil war, ethnic conflict, rebellion, rebel groups, rebel recruitment, participation, coercion, indoctrination, Nepal

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To Jocke

List of Essays

Acknowledgements

Whenever I come home from visits abroad, I am always struck by the atmosphere at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research. Unlike the empty corridors I find elsewhere, the doors at the department stand open. Whenever I am in need of advice I can always find a colleague in the fika room to talk with, and regardless of which colleague I bump into, the advice is always excellent. While I am apt to take it for granted, my visits abroad remind me of the value of working in such a welcoming and egalitarian environment.

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Introduction to the Dissertation

Rebellion requires the raising of rebel forces. There are two facets to understanding this phenomenon. The first facet deals with why individuals decide to *participate* in rebellion: why do people choose to leave their homes, abandoning their families and livelihoods to join armed rebellion, an activity associated with potentially enormous risks to personal safety? The second facet concerns how rebel groups' *recruitment* strategies can affect this decision. Why and when do groups use different approaches to recruitment? How do groups' approaches to mobilization affect an individual's decision calculus? Answering these questions is central to understanding the dynamics of rebellion[1], since the ability of groups to inflict violence, attain concessions, and survive as entities is dependent on success in mobilizing rebel fighters.[2] The essays in this dissertation focus on understanding these dual facets of participation and recruitment.

Participation has been long discussed in the civil war literature and often serves as a key causal mechanism. Unfortunately, however, participation as a mechanism is often formulated in vague terms and is rarely theoretically developed. As a result, it is also omitted from most models, resulting in a lack of empirical testing. As long as participation remains excluded from the models, research results will be afflicted with theoretical equifinality. The contribution of this dissertation lies in an attempt to open this black box by tackling three sets of gaps in the existing literature; these relate to the assumptions made in most studies on participation, the theoretical bases for our understanding of participation and recruitment, and the record of empirical testing of these theories.

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[1] There are many words to describe this type of political violence. In this dissertation, I use rebellion, civil war, civil conflict, insurgency, insurrection, internal conflict, and intrastate conflict to mean the same thing: violence between a rebel group and a government based on a political incompatibility. These terms are used within largely the same theoretical and empirical literature on rebellion. There is also a large body of literature on revolution, which is somewhat divorced from the civil war literature. This is due in part to the fact that scholars of revolution are interested not only in understanding the use of force to settle an incompatibility, but also the accompanying social transformation from one epoch to another. Empirically revolution scholars have traditionally focused on "classic" historical revolutions in Russia, France, China, etc., although they have also examined peasant revolutions in third world countries.

[2] While participation can take a variety of forms, from providing tacit forms of collaboration, to working as a political activist, to taking up arms as a militant, in this dissertation, I focus on participation as a fighter.

The essays call into question a number of fundamental assumptions common to the participation literature. This dissertation indicates that there is a great deal of leverage to be had by re-focusing attention from the individual to the rebel group as the unit of analysis since doing so allows for an examination of rebel tactics in recruitment. Once the unit of analysis shifts to the rebel group, the validity of other assumptions comes into focus. Participation theories largely assume free choice, addressing the question of why individuals choose to join or abstain from rebellion. By focusing on the rebel group as an actor, a limitation to the free choice assumption becomes apparent: many individuals do not choose to join rebellion, they are forced to do so. Whether at gunpoint or through the use of threats, rebel groups can employ coercive methods to ensure participation, an empirical phenomenon which will remain overlooked as long as researchers continue to assume free choice. Similarly, a simple reading of many conflicts reveals that rebel groups shift between recruitment tactics: sometimes they use coercion, other times they purchase support with the use of selective material incentives. Yet even the most advanced existing research on participation assumes that rebel recruitment strategies are path dependent, i.e. that they are chosen at the outset and remain static throughout the conflict. This assumption flies directly in the face of empirical common sense, and so the essays here allow for dynamic recruitment processes.

All of the essays in this dissertation also seek to improve the theoretical bases of participation by either specifying the logic of existing, largely implicit, arguments regarding participation, or by producing new theoretical ideas regarding participation and recruitment. Several facets of recruitment that have received little or no theoretical attention in the literature are addressed, such as coercion, indoctrination, and other tactics intended to garner participants. The essays in this dissertation also develop theoretical arguments to explain how levels of participation and types of recruitment practices affect conflict violence as well as how violence in turn affects the recruitment environment.

Finally, the vast majority of existing theoretical models have not been tested empirically. Participation may be a key causal mechanism in the quantitative literature on civil war, but it remains empirically black-boxed since it is omitted from statistical models. While there have been some prominent case studies and ex-combatant surveys which have addressed participation and recruitment, there are to date no global empirical analyses of participation, making it difficult to draw generalizations. Moreover, many undertheorized facets of participation and recruitment—for example the use of coercion—have not been the object of systematic empirical analysis. Empirically, I approach the topic of participation and recruitment using both extensive and intensive methods. Essays I and II use global data from the past 50+ years. Essay II builds on a new dataset of rebel troop size for over 400 rebel groups active between 1946 and 2007. These data allow for the

first quantitative testing of the correlates of participation. Essay III also employs statistical analysis, but on temporally and spatially disaggregated micro-level data from the conflict in Nepal, 1996-2006. Essay IV is an intensive study based on several rounds of fieldwork in Nepal.

In the next section, I discuss previous research on participation and recruitment. After presenting the major theoretical approaches to the topic, I discuss what gaps are evident in the previous research. I then present the four essays, and place them in context to this body of previous research. Finally, I discuss the joint contributions of the essays and their implications for future research.

Previous Research

The previous research on participation and recruitment comes from several different strands of literature. A minority of the literature deals explicitly with the question of why individuals participate in rebellion, but the majority is concerned with related, but distinctly different, phenomena. In the large literature on rebellion, participation and political violence often overlap in the theorizing. The question of why men rebel (Gurr 1970) actually contains two questions: why do men participate in rebellion and why does rebellion occur? The literature thus contains a number of claims regarding participation, but varies in the extent to which these claims are explicit. In this section I first provide an overview of the four most prominent schools of previous research in which participation plays a key role: inequality; the collective action paradigm; the security perspective; and structuralist accounts. I then turn to the research gaps that become evident after a reading of the existing literature.

Inequality

While theorizing about the sources of rebellion has a long history dating back to at least Aristotle, the field hit its stride in the early 1960s in the wake of a series of guerilla insurgencies in China, Greece, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Spurred to comprehend the roots of these movements and understand them beyond their relevance to the Cold War, a number of scholars put forward conjectures regarding their origins. During this period, the dominant theoretical school focused on inequality. Both intuitively appealing, and grounded in earlier writings by Plato, Marx, de Tocqueville, and others, this line of reasoning posits that nations with unequal distribution of wealth are more vulnerable to political violence of various forms. Because of its theoretical foundations and its prevalence in conflict situations, scholars have given inequality a preeminent position at the center of conflict studies, "[the Economic Inequality-Political Conflict

nexus] is…probably the crucial issue in conflict studies. If it could be solved, all other conflict puzzles would fall into place" (Lichbach 1989: 434). In this school, economic inequalities are argued to lead to conflict because they generate grievances that impel men to take to arms (cf. Russett 1964; Huntington 1968). As such, participation is the key causal mechanism connecting economic inequality and the resulting political conflict, even if this remains implicit in a portion of the literature.

A more nuanced variation of this argument relies on the concept of relative deprivation (Davies 1962), which states that political violence is more likely to occur when people's expectations about what they should be achieving exceed their actual levels of achievement. Gurr (1970) popularized the concept in his seminal *Why Men Rebel,* in which he suggested three different patterns that relative deprivation could take: decremental deprivation, in which a group's value expectations remain relatively constant but capabilities decline; aspirational deprivation in which capabilities remain static but aspirations increase; and progressive deprivation, in which there is a simultaneous increase in expectation and decrease in capabilities. Gurr's formulation of the relative deprivation theory places its explanatory power squarely on the shoulders of participation: relative deprivation leads to frustration and aggression,[3] which manifests itself as political conflict. The foundations of the argument thus lie in the grievances that motivate individuals to participate in rebellion. The greater the intensity of deprivation, the stronger the motivational base for political violence, and the greater the magnitude for violence (Gurr 1970: 9).[4]

These theoretical arguments led to a subsequent explosion in empirical applications; but when findings proved anomalous or contradictory, the argument was reformulated, resulting in a plethora of hypotheses. Lichbach (1989) points out that there are in theory five possible relationships between economic inequality and political conflict: positive (which can take various forms, such as linear and exponential), negative, convex (inverted U-shaped), concave (U-shaped) or null, and that the empirical literature provides examples of all. The plethora of studies (over 43, according to Lichbach) led to Midlarsky's (1988: 491) acerbic observation that "sometimes the relationship [between inequality and political violence] is above the level of significance, sometimes below it; but rarely is there a robust relationship discovered between the two variables. Equally rarely

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[3] This line of reasoning rests on the frustration-aggression thesis developed by Dollard et al. (1939) that asserts that frustration produces a number of responses, one of which is aggression; if the frustration is not relieved, it is increasingly likely to result in aggression. For work on the frustration-aggression thesis and the inequality research program it inspired, see Davies (1997).

[4] This focus on participation as central to inequality theories of political conflict was not limited to Gurr. Olson (1963: 531), for example, writes that, "any adequate analysis of the relationship between economic growth and revolutionary political changes must consider the problem in terms of the individuals who bring revolutions about."

does the relationship plunge into the depths of the black hole of nonsignificance." The problem boils down to one of poor indicators for the relationship: vertical measures like Gini coefficients are inadequate proxies for relative inequality, and their measurement at the aggregate national level is a poor match for the individualistic basis of inequality theories (Canache 1996).[5] Moreover, inequality is so prevalent that it overpredicts rebellion (Mason 2004).

The field of inequality and relative deprivation lay largely dormant, particularly in the large-N literature, for the past two decades. However, some recent works have begun to reinvigorate the field. Østby (2008) and Østby et al. (2009) seek to rectify past empirical deficiencies that were based on vertical measures of inequality (like Gini coefficients) to instead explicitly capture horizontal, or group, inequalities that are more in keeping with Gurr and others' formulations of the relative deprivation problem. Similarly, Buhaug et al. (2009) use spatially disaggregated data on income and violence to determine whether the distribution of wealth is correlated with armed conflict at the local level.[6] Despite these efforts, the topic remains saddled with data problems: appropriate large-N measures of inequality are difficult or impossible to find on a global, annual basis, and small-N studies are burdened with generalization problems.

Collective Action Paradigm

At the same time as the inequality/relative deprivation paradigm dominated political theories of rebellion, Mancur Olson wrote *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965), which questioned the assumption found in virtually all previous literature that individuals with common interests will join to attain these interests. Olson argued instead that to do so would not be rational since the common interest is a public good, that is, anyone can partake of it regardless of whether they helped to bring about the good or not. This creates a situation in which it is more rational to free ride (i.e. abstain from participation) and thereby avoid the private costs involved with participation. As an economist, Olson's primary interest was in union and lobby group behavior, but his argument was formulated in general terms that could be applied to any group interest. When Tullock (1971) explicitly applied

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[5] Gini coefficients are used in this context to measure the dispersion of income in the population.
[6] These income data are unfortunately available for 1990 only, making it impossible to determine whether it is relative inequality or changes to relative inequality which elicit conflictual behavior. The fact that the data are based on geographic units also poses an aggregation problem, in that we cannot assume that the attributes of areas where fighting takes place necessarily correlate with the attributes of the individuals that participate in that fighting. Rebels may choose to fight in richer or poorer areas for strategic reasons; if so, then attributing the correlation between relative income and conflict violence to a participation mechanism would be lead to an invalid causal inference.

Olson's ideas to the problem of revolution the rebellion literature segued into the now-dominant collective action paradigm.

The public good problems inherent in collective action are argued to be particularly true for rebellion since the risks associated with armed conflict are potentially enormous and all collective benefits are highly uncertain and distributed in the future (Lichbach 1998). That a rebel group fights for public goods but individuals involved in rebellion pay private costs creates strong incentives for rational individuals to abstain from participation and instead opt to free-ride. Thus, in this formulation the grievances associated with inequality are insufficient to explain individual participation in collective action; Lichbach (1989: 464) notes that "collective action theory implies that any distributional measure that one cares to construct…will be uncorrelated with dissent."

The rationalist solution to the free-rider problem is selective incentives, which are private gains distributed only to those individuals that participate (Olson 1965; Popkin 1979; Tullock 1971).[7] The critical element to selective incentives is that an individual must take part in the rebellion to be a beneficiary of selective incentives. Conceptually, the literature has pointed to three types of selective incentives: material, social, and purposive.

Of the different types of incentives, it is material incentives that have received the most attention. A number of economists have produced models which apply market analogies to rebellion. In them, economists have emphasized the expected private returns to insurgents, in which only active insurgents share in the booty taken in a successful insurrection (Grossman 1991, 1999). In these types of models, insurrections are treated as an economic activity that competes with production for scarce resources: a peasant family can obtain income from production, soldiering, or participating in insurrection. Soldiering in many economic models is thus analogous to supply and demand concerns in the labor market (cf. Andvig and Gates 2007; Beber and Blattman 2008; Gates 2002).

In these formulations, however, booty from insurrection is granted in the future and conditioned upon capture of the state and therefore depends on the success of the insurrection. Because there is a low probability of being granted the incentive, and even with success, it will be dispersed only far in the future, these models should not be as powerful in explaining participation as those in which selective incentive are granted directly after an individual begins to participate. At the same time, Oliver (1993) notes a logical flaw inherent in selective incentive approach: someone has to pay for

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[7] Lichbach (1994: 418) notes the irony of selective incentives being the cause for public goods: "peasant collective action is a dilemma wrapped inside a paradox wrapped inside an irony. The dilemma is that peasants would be better off cooperating, yet they do not. The paradox is that rational peasants should not cooperate, but they do. The irony is that selfishness can explain the paradox and solve the dilemma. Selfishness, that is, often permits the cooperation that facilitates the emergence of purportedly selfless goals."

the incentives and no one wants to devote their private wealth to dispense selective incentives in pursuit of a public good.

The solution to Oliver's critique comes from the "greed vs. grievance" literature launched by Collier and Hoeffler (2001). In it, greedy rebels capture material resources otherwise unavailable to them without the cover of war. In the literature that has grown up around this idea, natural resources and their rents, as well as the looting of civilian populations (Azam 2002; Azam and Hoeffler 2002), provide funding that can be used to distribute immediate selective incentives. Collier later moderated his rhetoric from "greed" to the less inflammatory "opportunity structures" approach. This is the same basic argument regarding the exploitation of material incentives, but Collier abstains from labeling rebels cross opportunists and concedes that they can be driven at least in part by grievances/ideology. The key is that these grievances could never be expressed without the financial opportunities that resource exploitation offers rebel groups.

Another prominent form of incentives is social incentives. [8] Olson himself noted the value of social incentives, and subsequent scholars focusing on rebellion have argued that they can provide a powerful foundation for mobilizing participation in rebellion. Close-knit communities share identities and pre-existing social networks that facilitate contacts based on shared norms. The resulting cultural homogeneity and tight networks within the group allows for members to more easily mobilize participants, and to impose costs for non-participation (Taylor 1988).[9] Non-pecuniary rewards like a sense of belonging to the group and increased status function as selective incentives. The flip side of the coin is that group leaders can impose punishments, in particular, the threat of being excluded from the community if one does not participate in collective mobilization and violates existing norms of reciprocity.

While communities can be constituted on the basis of virtually any social grouping, ethnic groups have been the most prominent type of social grouping discussed in the civil war literature (cf. Gates 2002; Horowitz 1985; Kaufman 1996; Kaufmann 1996; Sambanis 2001).[10] Within the enormous

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[8] There are those that discount non-material incentives in favor of a purely materialist conception, "[critics claim that] almost anything that motivates people (for example, prestige or altruism) can be labeled a selective incentive. Hence, the selective incentives idea is tautological. It merely redescribes collective action with another vocabulary. I would respond that a narrowly materialist conception of selective incentives fits many of the facts of peasant struggles. Peasant rebels do seek private pecuniary rewards. Moreover, a narrowly materialist conception of selective incentives offers many important insights into peasant conflicts" (Lichbach 1994: 417).

[9] Many stress the importance of networks for mobilization (cf. Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Moore 1966; Petersen 2001; Scott 1976). Networks are also discussed in the resource mobilization literature, which view them as key mobilizing structures (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 1997).

[10] Gates also discusses the non-pecuniary rewards gained through participation in groups united by a common ideology.

literature on ethnic conflict, researchers have focused more or less explicitly on participation. A large part, although not all, of this literature assumes that members of an ethnic group will participate because of the individual benefits gained through social incentives.[11] Some go so far as to argue that social incentives are in fact preferable to economic incentives, since they attract committed rebels ("investors") rather than individuals simply seeking personal profit ("consumers") (Lichbach 1998; Weinstein 2007). Intangible incentives based on non-pecuniary rewards like solidarity and group identification within the ethnic group thus can induce participation, and such incentives are argued to result in more credible movements and more committed rebels (Weinstein 2007).

Finally, within the wider field of collective action, scholars have also discussed purposive incentives, which are usually conceptualized as internalized norms and values in which the person's self-esteem depends on doing the right thing (Oliver 1993). This line of thinking has received relatively little attention in the literature on rebellion, in part because many find it difficult to conceive of purposive benefits as sufficient to motivate participation in an activity as dangerous as rebellion. A prominent exception is Wood (2003: 2), who shows in her study of Salvadorian rebels that emotional and moral motives were "essential to the emergence and consolidation of insurgent collective action." She argues that rebelling peasants did so not for material or social benefits, but out of a "pleasure of agency;" they took pride and pleasure in the assertion of their interests and identity. Others have suggested that for some individuals, the payoff for participation is the "excitement" that comes with rebel activities (Keen 2000: 23).

While the literature subsequent to Olson has focused on positive selective incentives, Olson himself also noted the value of negative incentives. Negative incentives entail the use of coercion and punishments to induce participation in the group and overcome the free-rider problem. Since Olson, however, the topic of coercion in the context of rebellion has been largely absent from the theoretical literature, with the notable exception of Gates (2002) who observes that participation is often forced at gunpoint and that this poses a problem for the group: how should the group induce compliance from those that do not want to participate? Gates answers this question by developing a model which identifies conditions under which coercion enjoys a greater likelihood of success; the larger question of why a rebel group would choose coercion over positive selective incentives is, however, not addressed.

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[11] Others argue that ethnic group members will be driven by security concerns, or because they are manipulated by ethnic elites; I will return to both of these ideas.

Security Perspective

The recent hegemony of the collective action paradigm in explaining participation in rebellion has led a number of scholars to question its validity, with Kalyvas and Kocher (2007) leading the way in their rebuttal to the collective action paradigm's dominance in civil war studies They argue that the problem with the collective action paradigm is that it assumes that non-participation is costless. Because civilians are often victimized in war, however, joining rebellion is rather a way to minimize potential costs. Kalyvas and Kocher go on to argue that the type of conflict violence (indiscriminate versus selective) is a measure of the risk for civilian victimization. This idea that physical insecurity can lead to increased participation is not a new one; indeed, the literature on how state repression can generate—or suppress—incentives for participation is quite rich. One facet of this literature suggests a positive relationship; with higher levels of repression, an individual may opt to join rebellion to prevent victimization at the hands of the state (Lichbach 1987; Mason and Krane 1989; Sambanis and Zinn 2005) or as an emotional response to state violence (Petersen 2002). Similarly, the literature on the ethnic security dilemma (Kaufmann 1996; Posen 1993) suggests that members of ethnic groups are likely to join rebel groups out of concern for their safety.

Another facet of this literature suggests that the relationship is negative (Tullock 1971). In this line of reasoning, repression is largely conceptualized as a cost in the cost-benefit calculus found in rational actor models. When the costs of repression are too great, actors will not participate in rebellion. Repression thus depresses the likelihood of participation. Interestingly, both predictions rest on individual safety as the driving mechanism behind abstaining or participating. The difference is that one assumes that it is safer to abstain from participation when the state employs repressive tactics, while the other assumes that it is safer to participate (and thus obtain rebel refuge). Either way, it is an individual's calculations regarding their personal security that is the deciding factor in their decision.[12]

Structuralist Accounts

The category of structural accounts is not a coherent body of literature. Rather, within the larger literature on civil war, there are a number of arguments that various opportunity structures—usually related to characteristics of the state and society—are connected with civil war because

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[12] There is yet another argument that the relationship is non-monotonic and characterized by an inverted-U, in which participation is more likely at intermediate levels of repression than at low or high levels (Muller 1985; Muller and Weede 1994).

they lead to participation.[13] This literature is the least explicit in operationalizing participation as a causal mechanism; instead, the arguments tend to be largely implicit. Other research schools, such as inequality, were far more explicit in explaining rebellion as a direct result of mobilization. Within most structuralist accounts, the causal story is often based on participation as a mechanism, but the logic of the mechanism is often not spelled out.

Structuralist accounts have cropped up primarily within the large-N literature on civil war. Structural antecedents, such as how the state is organized, are argued to create incentives or disincentives for participation. Variables like regime type are thus argued to capture costs for non-participation (Buhaug 2006; Gurr 1993; Hegre et al. 2001; Reynal-Querol 2002), as are measures of state strength (Fearon and Laitin 2003). When states are weak they cannot hinder rebel group behavior because of inept local policing or counterinsurgency practices; this lowers the opportunity costs for participation. Individuals will opt to join insurgencies not only because the likelihood of being caught and punished is much lower in weak states, but also because the likelihood of victory is greater. Numerous other variables can also be found in large-N civil war models, which use participation more or less explicitly to explain the correlation between various structural factors and civil conflict. The problem is that participation is presented as but one of many possible causal mechanisms, making it difficult to parse out a valid theoretical story.

The resource mobilization literature also argues that political opportunity structures are correlated with various types of contentious politics, including political violence. Political opportunity structures are operationalized as, for example, the openness and type of polity, the relationship between elites and contenders, the divisions within elites. Because of the focus on mobilization in this literature, the participation arguments are somewhat more explicit, but there is little cross-fertilization between the resource mobilization literature and the large-N civil war literature. This is due in large part to the breadth of theoretical approaches contained in the resource mobilization school and the multitude of forms of political violence which it seeks to address, ranging from social movement formation to revolution. This heterogeneity makes it difficult to transfer directly to civil war studies, as the applicability of many of the claims found in the resource mobilization literature are of questionable

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[13] Theda Skocpol's (1979) work brought the state back in to studies of revolution and political violence. Using a historical-structuralist approach to explain revolution, Skocpol focused almost entirely on facets of the state, in particular the relationship of state rulers/bureaucracies to international competitors (external threats) on one hand and domestic dominant classes (class conflict) on the other. Her model, however, provides virtually no discussion of participation or mobilization in revolutionary processes.

value when applied to armed conflict.[14] Resource mobilization theories are more widely applied in the social mobilization literature, which is natural since the resource mobilization approach largely grew out of an interest in explaining social movements in western democracies (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 1997; McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977).[15]

Gaps in Previous Research

Despite a proliferation of literature that deals with participation either explicitly or implicitly, there are a number of research gaps. One can distinguish between those that relate to basic assumptions, theory, and empirical tests.

There are at least three basic assumptions in the existing literature that warrant further examination. The first is that the literature on participation in rebellion almost always departs from the point of view of the individual recruit: rebellions are collections of individuals, and the challenge is to explain the behavior of these individuals. Few authors have explored whether there is leverage to be gained by focusing on the rebel group as the unit of analysis. Rebel groups have a number of different tactics available to them to garner recruits, and why and when they employ these different tactics can inform the individual level calculus of the populace. With the exception of Weinstein's (2007) work which examines a rebel group's choice between recruiting using economic versus social incentives, rebel group agency is largely overlooked.[16]

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[14] For example, resource mobilization contends that the better off an individual is financially, the greater the likelihood that s/he will participate in social movements (McCarthy and Zald 1973). Such a claim within the context of civil war would be incongruous without making a number of qualifications.

[15] Resource mobilization is a broad and somewhat incoherent approach. The literature shares a number of commonalities, such as the idea that individuals join together for collective action to attain common goals; an assumption that grievances are ever-present and therefore are of little use in explaining mobilization; the assumption that participation is based on cost/benefit calculations; the idea that resources of various types enable the building of movements as well as their subsequent behavior; and that movements act in opportunity structures that encourage or constrain their activities. While ostensibly rational in its basis, constructivist ideas sneak in as well, which only illustrates the disparate nature of the approach.

[16] Some literature does touch on the topic of rebel group agency in recruitment. The instrumentalist approach to ethnic conflict, for example, focuses on the role of leadership by positing that leaders manipulate ethnic identities as a tool for mobilizing constituents (cf. Lake and Rothchild 1998). In another vein, Nilsson (2008) examines how organizational structures can affect the likelihood of ex-combatants being remobilized for political violence, although even here the focus is on the individuals that are necessary to make this remobilization happen. The resource mobilization literature also takes an explicit interest in group organization, but this approach is rarely applied in the civil war literature. Most of the organizational focus in the resource mobilization literature centers on the question of how organizations generate resources, which can be moral, cultural, social-organizational, human, and material (Edwards and McCarthy 2007). Because resource mobilization processes can encompass the mobilization

A consequence of this focus on the individual calculus rather than on group tactics leads us to the second assumption: that virtually all scholars of participation assume free choice in the matter. Because most theories are based on an interest in understanding the motivations behind participation in rebellion, or the cost-benefit ratio that facilitates membership, they have naturally assumed that participation in rebellion is voluntary. Empirically, it is evident that forced or coerced recruitment takes place in many conflict zones; yet despite this, it remains virtually untheorized.

The literature that does focus explicitly on rebel group agency has suggested that recruitment practices are path dependent. That is, the model is static: the tactic that the group employs to garner recruits at the outset—whether economic incentives, social incentives, coercion, etc.—does not change throughout the duration of the conflict. This is a heroic assumption and one that enjoys little prima facie support based on a reading of most conflicts. For example, one is hard pressed to identify a case in which the rebel group employs coercion from the outset; instead rebel groups generally switch between the various tactics available in their repertoire. Yet the literature is surprisingly silent on the question of why and when groups shift recruitment tactics, despite having potentially crucial consequences for the civilian population and conflict dynamics as a whole.

A second set of research gaps concern theories of participation. One problem is that many of the theories remain largely implicit. In the early civil war literature, participation was the self-evident mechanism connecting various independent variables (like inequality) with the occurrence of rebellion. As the field developed, however, the mechanisms linking independent variables with dependent variables in the civil war literature often remained underspecified, or presented problems of equifinality as multiple mechanisms were posited to explain the correlations.[17] In this literature, participation pops up implicitly, but the logic behind the arguments is rarely developed. More precisely formulated and testable mechanisms are necessary to understand the *why* behind various correlations in the civil war literature.

Theories of participation have also been largely divorced from the study of conflict dynamics, including conflict violence. There is little work done on understanding how levels of participation and types of recruitment practices affect the pattern of conflict violence, with the exception of

of labor, it borders on the tautological since participation is a defining feature of mobilization; ultimately the "value-added" qualitative aspects of labor (expertise, experience, etc.) save the concept in this respect. Beyond this, the resource mobilization approach has also discussed different organizational structures (cf. Jenkins 1983) and may ultimately be helpful in understanding rebellion.

[17] Within the natural resource literature, there are a handful of studies which have striven to specify and test the causal mechanisms connecting natural resources with civil conflict, cf. Humphreys (2005), Lujala (2010).

Weinstein (2007), who argues that the recruitment base of the rebel group will affect the level of violence a group uses against civilians. Even less has been done on how battlefield outcomes affect the recruitment environment. Although this potentially endogenous relationship poses considerable methodological challenges for researchers, it is nonetheless surprising that the topic is rarely broached since both of these dimensions of conflict surely affect the possibilities for war and peace.

The final research gap concerns the record of empirical testing. While the civil war literature has been profligate at engaging in systematic testing, participation is rarely, if ever, included as a variable in the statistical model; it is left untested as a causal mechanism. There are a number of case studies of countries like El Salvador, Vietnam, Lithuania, etc. which have contributed to theory-building in the field. A rash of ex-combatant surveys have also begun to crop up which provide some leverage in explaining participation in individual countries, but which are of questionable value in drawing generalizations, particularly since initial results suggest a number of conflicting results between studies. Comparative case study work also exists (Weinstein 2007) which uses recruitment as an independent variable, but no comparative work has been done on recruitment as a dependent variable. The lack of quantitative data on participation in rebellion means that there have been no large-N studies of either.[18]

Presenting the Essays

The four essays in this dissertation share participation and recruitment as a common theme, serving at times as the independent variable and at times as the dependent variable. Essay I focuses on a particular type of recruitment practice—ethnic mobilization—in explaining conflict violence, while Essay II attempts to open the empirical black box of participation by modeling it as the dependent variable. Essay III examines the effect of conflict violence on another type of recruitment practice: coerced recruitment, while Essay IV examines the effect of indoctrination tactics on participation levels.

Throughout, there are two assumptions which are common to all of the essays. The first is that rebel groups are assumed to be able to act as unitary actors. This assumption is necessary for the cross-national studies, as data on factionalization within rebel groups are not available. The assumption also

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[18] Gurr and Moore (1997) include mobilization in their model on both the left and right-hand sides (their model is a three stage least squares estimator that estimates a system of four equations). They focus only on Minorities at Risk and operationalize mobilization as 1) the scope of support for the largest organization claiming to represent the ethnic group, and 2) the number of organizations that claimed to represent the group. They thus do not look at direct participation in rebellion, and their study is limited to minority groups deemed to be at risk for collective violence.

holds in the Nepal case, where there was relatively little in-fighting and no actual factionalization during the conflict. This assumption may not hold up in many other contexts, and recent research has begun to focus on within-group variation in recruitment strategies (Jönsson 2009; Weinstein 2007). I also assume the existence of first movers (Elster 2006); that is, I do not examine the early joiners that constitute the founding leadership, but rather how this core leadership recruits others to join.

Essay I

The essay "From Armed Conflict to War: Ethnic Mobilization and Conflict Intensification," was published in *International Studies Quarterly*, 53(2): 369-388. In it, I address the widely held idea that ethnic conflicts are more violent than non-ethnic conflicts. Despite being a common contention in media and policy reports, as well as a prominent assumption in the ethnic conflict literature, this topic has not been studied systematically. This is particularly surprising since some researchers have challenged the assumption, arguing that many ideological conflicts have traditionally also experienced high levels of violence. Because the empirical evidence on both sides is largely anecdotal, this article fills a research gap by providing a systematic empirical investigation into the question. To do so, the study rests on two key distinctions. First, it examines conflict intensification, that is, the likelihood that a conflict will increase in violence from low-scale armed conflict to the high level of fatalities associated with war. This contrasts with previous literature that has primarily examined conflict onset and duration. The second distinction is that the study focuses on ethnic mobilization, that is, whether the rebel side in an armed conflict has mobilized partially or entirely along ethnic lines, rather than other facets of ethnicity such as ethnic composition or ethnic grievances. The research question is thus, given the existence of an ongoing intrastate armed conflict, does ethnic mobilization increase the risk of a conflict intensifying to war?

In this study, the type of recruitment serves as an independent variable, and the argument rests on the contention that when a group recruits along ethnic lines, there will be different consequences for conflict violence than when a group recruits along non-ethnic lines. A fundamental problem for all rebel groups is the need to maintain a certain level of manpower, which requires the identification and recruitment of new members. This is particularly challenging since most rebel groups are working with a limited capacity; for every resource used to recruit, there is less available for other activities such as training, intelligence-gathering, soliciting civilian support, obtaining arms and other supplies, and so on. The fewer resources the group expends on recruitment, the more it has to direct to the war effort and the stronger it is likely to be.

Ethnicity is crucial in this picture because the ascriptive nature of ethnicity eases the recruitment problem that all rebel groups face. I argue that ethnic belonging can be more easily established than ideological beliefs. In addition to physical attributes, other markers like names, language, and place of residence can provide clues as to an individual's ethnicity, as can sources of local knowledge, like government registries or other community members. The ascriptive nature of ethnicity provides rebel leadership with a number of organizational advantages. First, it allows leaders to target their recruitment efforts, effectively overcoming the information problem and diminishing coordination costs since leaders can rely on existing ethnic networks. It is also more difficult for the government to co-opt factions. Individuals risk retribution from the wider ethnic community should they switch sides, which lessens attrition. The logic of the security dilemma suggests that even those who have no interest in joining the rebel group per se may nonetheless sign up out of security concerns. The entire ethnic group can be seen by the government as potential rebels or rebel supporters simply because of their shared ethnicity to members of the rebel group. When governments use repressive strategies amongst the civilian population of the ethnic group, the best option for ensuring security is often to go underground and seek the relative safety of the rebel group. Finally, ethnicity is seen by many as providing a social incentive that induces members to join due to emotional benefits like solidary and group identification. Due to shared norms and interactions within the ethnic community, ethnically mobilized groups are argued to generate more committed rebels and leaders who are able to provide more credible promises.

Because of the organizational advantages associated with ethnic mobilization—minimized coordination costs, lessened attrition, and greater levels of commitment—I contend that intrastate armed conflicts that mobilize along ethnic lines will be more likely to intensify to war than those that do not mobilize along ethnic lines. To test this argument, I employ time-series data on all intrastate conflicts for the period 1946-2004. Using a Cox model, I examine whether the conflicts intensify to war, which is operationalized as 1,000 battle-related deaths in a year. I find support for the contention: the results show that ethnically-mobilized conflicts have a 92% higher risk for intensifying to war than conflicts in which the rebels do not mobilize along ethnic lines. This positive correlation holds across all alternative specifications of the model and robustness tests. I find that in absolute terms most conflicts that intensify do so at the outset of conflict, but given that a conflict survives, the conditional risk that it will escalate to war continues to increase until year 12, after which it decreases. In a final extension of the analysis, I run the model on a different but related dependent variable, conflict severity, which measures the total number of battle-related fatalities in a conflict. The results are again supported: rebel

mobilization along ethnic lines is associated with higher levels of conflict severity.

Essay II

Essay II, "Participation in Rebellion: Rebel Troop Size, 1946-2007," was presented at the Jan Tinbergen Peace Science Conference; Amsterdam; 29 June-1 July 2009. In it, I depart from the problem that there are no systematic, comparative empirical studies which explicitly evaluate the question of what causes individuals to participate in rebellion. Because of this, participation remains black-boxed as a causal mechanism in the civil war literature. This essay derives a number of testable hypotheses from the existing literature on participation by identifying factors suggested to be correlated with participation in civil war, namely, material selective incentives like contraband and oil in the conflict zone; social selective incentives like ethnic mobilization; state repression; weak state proxies like gdp per capita and reliance on oil exports; and regime type. These hypotheses are then empirically tested using new data on rebel troop size for over 400 rebel groups active in armed conflict during the period 1946-2007.

Surprisingly, neither the contraband measure nor the oil in conflict zone measure is statistically significant. This finding contradicts previous literature that suggests that individuals will participate in rebellion in order to reap profits from the looting of natural resources. In contrast to literature emphasizing material selective incentives, this finding suggests that any relationship between lootable resources and rebellion is likely to function via other causal stories than participation. Social incentives do not fare any better: the sign for ethnic mobilization varies across the models and is not significant in any. Ethnic mobilization is but one measure for social incentives, and I raise the possibility that the benefit of group belonging may be stronger for other types of groups. Due to a lack of data, however, other types of social groupings cannot be tested in the study.

Instead, it appears that security concerns are of key importance in determining rebel troop size. A measure of government repression is statistically significant, but its effect is non-monotonic; individuals are more likely to join rebel groups when repression is at intermediate levels. I provide a number of possible explanations for this result. One is that mid-level repression generates sufficient grievances to motivate participation while mobilizing against such regimes is still not too costly. A second alternative is that it is capturing inconsistent practices: countries that practice inconsistent repression will see increased levels of dissent because consistent repression signals that there is a high probability of participants paying severe costs, while inconsistent repressive practices decrease the probability

of being victimized. A final set of explanations center around the type of repression strategy.[19] High levels of repression are likely to be primarily capturing strategies of indiscriminate violence, which signal that the insurgent group cannot protect the populace, thus removing an incentive for joining the insurgency. Another variation of this explanation suggests that the more limited scale of the mid-level repressors may be capturing selective repression strategies. With indiscriminate repression, the question of who is victimized is ultimately a question of luck while selective repression provides information that allows individuals to better determine the likelihood that they will be targeted; those who estimate a high probability will take refuge in the relative security of the rebel group.

The results also revealed that variables which are commonly argued to proxy state strength—gdp per capita and whether the country is an oil exporter—found mixed support. The results show that gdp is statistically significant and that for each additional thousand dollars in gdp, the number of predicted rebels decreases by 13-17%. Oil exporting states, on the other hand, are not correlated with different levels of troop size. This opens up for several interpretations. One is that either (or both) of these measures are poor proxies for state strength. The other is that they are capturing different facets of state strength.

The results here suggest that researchers should re-think some of the causal stories put forth in the civil war literature. Arguments that imply that variables like contraband are correlated with conflict because they encourage participation warrant further consideration in light of these findings. There are two possibilities for how theories of civil war should be revised. The first is that it may be the case that other causal stories are more plausible and that a number of variables argued to connect explanatory variables with civil war via participation instead work via other causal mechanisms. The second possibility is that participation in civil war is rather a matter of thresholds: a certain number of rebels are needed in certain contexts, and rebel leaders might deliberately limit participation, whether for tactical or financial reasons, or to decrease the risk of infiltration or defection. In that case, some of the variables which were not correlated here with large rebel groups may thus nonetheless still be correlated with participation: these variables may not affect a leader's ability to build a *large* army, but rather a leader's ability to build a *large enough* army. I conclude that a number of theories central to the study of civil war literature should be re-evaluated in light of these findings, and suggest that researchers should consider and test alternative stories and explore more nuanced arguments regarding participation.

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[19] Kalyvas (2006) distinguishes between selective and indiscriminate violence against civilians. Selective violence targets specific individuals on the basis of information about that individual, while indiscriminate violence is executed en masse without regard to the actions or preferences of individuals.

Essay III

"Coercion in Rebel Recruitment" is a working paper that was presented at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research Seminar; Uppsala; 20 November 2008. The use of coercive measures by rebel groups in recruitment is a well-known phenomenon to those who study civil war but previous research has largely failed to address this topic, instead focusing on the material and social benefits that are used to attract voluntary recruits. To date, the only empirical study which assesses coerced versus voluntary recruitment is Humphreys and Weinstein's (2008) survey of ex-combatants in Sierra Leone, which finds that common explanations of participation in rebellion are not applicable to abductees. Unfortunately, they do not address the topic beyond this empirical observation, making the subject of coercion wholly undertheorized in the literature.

In this essay, I build on the observation that all recruitment strategies involve some cost to the rebel group. Recruitment based on economic incentives necessitates access to funding as well as the willingness to divert this funding to recruitment, while recruitment based on social endowments is a time-consuming process that often demands multiple contacts before recruits can be convinced to join the movement. As a result, previous research has concluded that coerced recruitment is a cheap alternative. I argue to the contrary that coercion provides a poor organizational base for rebellion and is a suboptimal strategy. There are several costs inherent in coercion which makes it prohibitively expensive for rebel groups. First, rebels who have been coerced into the group are less likely to be committed to the group and run a high risk for attrition. Monitoring forced recruits to prevent defection is labor intensive, and an inefficient use of resources. Second, despite efforts to monitor the forced recruits, they often succeed in escaping. This is particularly problematic since many take advantage of the heat of battle to make their escape, drastically reducing military effectiveness. Finally, forced recruitment also generates external costs by alienating the civilian population: there are strong incentives for civilians to collaborate with government forces by providing them with information on rebel troop movements in order to prevent the kidnapping of locals.

Despite these costs, coercive practices are still sometimes employed by rebel groups. I address this puzzle by arguing that conflict dynamics affect if and when a rebel group employs coercion. While previous research on rebel recruitment has tended to treat a group's recruitment strategy as static, I maintain that groups are likely to shift recruitment strategies depending on the exigencies of the conflict. Specifically, I argue that in times of necessity, when rebel groups need to direct limited economic resources to other facets of the insurgency, the resource and manpower costs involved with economic and social recruitment can be too great. When rebels experience high levels of military engagement with the state, when they cannot retreat and re-group,

when they are pushing towards a final victory, the military necessity of having an adequate number of troops in the field can outweigh all other considerations. Thus, when these military imperatives require an increase in troops that cannot be obtained through normal processes of voluntary recruitment, rebel groups will be more likely to employ coercive measures in recruitment. This argument leads to two hypotheses. The first is that the more intense the conflict, the more likely it is that a rebel group will recruit using coercive measures; the second nuances this argument by specifying that the greater the number of rebel fatalities, the more likely it is that a rebel group will recruit using coercive measures.

To test these hypotheses I use micro-level data on the conflict in Nepal, 1996-2006. Nepal is a useful case for studying recruitment for a number of reasons. There is only one conflict in Nepal during the period and only one rebel group active in the conflict. This contrasts with other conflict areas which see either multiple conflicts or multiple rebel groups within a conflict.[20] Multiple groups increase the complexity of analysis since they introduce the element of intergroup competition for recruits, and conflict dynamics which are difficult to parse since the government must fight and negotiate on multiple fronts. Choosing a case with a single rebel group allows for a more transparent analysis of the conflict parties' behavior.

I first provide a qualitative account of the conflict which suggests that forced recruitment went hand in hand with escalated violence. Using only qualitative data, however, makes it difficult to establish temporal ordering. To study the question systematically, I employ cross-sectional time series data on the conflict which are disaggregated by district and month. The dependent variable is captured with a measure of the number of persons abducted by the Maoist rebels. During these abductions, individuals were indoctrinated into Maoist ideology and urged to join the Maoist movement. Most abductees were subsequently released after several days, but the experience of being abducted served as a powerful coercive force in rebel recruitment. In addition to being subjected to indoctrination sessions during the abduction, attractive recruits were targeted after release for further recruitment efforts.

Using negative binomial regressions, I find support for the second hypothesis: rebel fatalities are positively correlated with abductions in the subsequent month, as well as for a subset of abductions of children. The effect is quite strong: for each additional rebel fatality, the expected number of abductions increases by 3.1% in the subsequent month. By adjusting the lags, I find that this correlation only exists in the month following the battle losses, indicating that rebels use coercion only in the immediate aftermath of

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[20] Neighboring India, for example, has seen nine different rebellions since independence and dozens of active rebel groups.

their battlefield losses. I conclude that the results show that rebel recruitment strategies are dynamic, a claim which runs contrary to previous research.

Essay IV

The essay "Recruiting Rebels: Indoctrination and Political Education in Nepal," was published in *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Revolution in the 21st Century*, edited by Mahendra Lawoti and Anup Pahari, London: Routledge. This essay focuses again on the conflict in Nepal, and is based on several rounds of fieldwork in Nepal in which I interviewed rebel leaders and foot soldiers, as well as academics, and members of civil society and the international community. The analysis builds on these interviews as well as on secondary sources. Particularly useful for the study were a handful of reports written by anthropologists and journalists active in the Maoist rebel heartland during the conflict period. In this essay, I ask the question: how was the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) able to successfully recruit fighters to its organization? Starting off in 1996 with only a dozen fighters and a single rifle, the group grew to encompass thousands of fighters by the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) in November 2006.

The departure point for the essay is a gap in the previous literature on the conflict in Nepal, namely, that the focus in explaining the growth of the group has been almost entirely on the structural antecedents to the conflict. This mirrors in many ways the structural focus prevalent in the large-N civil war literature. While I acknowledge the importance of contextual factors in Nepal, such as social and economic inequality, geographic disparities, poor governance, and state repression, I also argue that to understand the CPN-M's success in recruiting rebels one must go beyond context. Indeed, this context has been largely static: Nepal has long been plagued with a multitude of social and economic ills that has resulted in it having one of the lowest human development scores in the world.[21] How was it that the CPN-M was able to mobilize individuals to take to arms over these issues? Given the context in which a rebel group operates, what strategies can it use to increase recruitment? In addressing the conflict from this angle, I examine rebel group agency rather than the effect of contextual factors on individual calculations.

In particular, I focus on one key strategy used by the CPN-M, namely, indoctrination.[22] The study shows that rebel leaders went so far as to assert

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[21] Nepal ranked in the lowest 15% on the UN Human Development Index throughout the 1990-1995 period preceding the conflict (cf. UN *Human Development Reports* 1990-1995).

[22] The definition of indoctrination varies, although in general it is defined as the repetition of an idea or belief frequently in order to persuade a person to accept it. Because of the pejorative connotation of the term, I alternate between using it and "political education" in the essay to emphasize that I do not wish to introduce a normative element to the analysis.

that indoctrination was more important than other facets of the insurgency, such as arms acquisition and military training. The party spent a year prior to the onset of conflict sending political-cultural teams into villages to educate the masses on the aims of the Maoists and the necessity of using armed force in exacting political change. To do so, the teams used various forms of propaganda such as mass meetings, cultural campaigns, postering and walling, pamphlets, newspaper articles, and holding political classes. With the onset of the People's War in 1996 and the transition of the CPN-M from political party to active rebel group, campaigning amongst the populace increased. The Maoists used several different approaches to spreading information about their movement and educating the peasantry, amongst them mass gatherings; individual motivators who recruited door-to-door; kidnapping of school children and others for indoctrination; and widespread propaganda activities.

The different indoctrination campaigns fulfilled perhaps the most basic and essential function of informing the populace about the existence, goals, and methods of the CPN-M. They advertised the successes of the movement and emphasized the benefits of joining. The Maoist approach had a powerful effect on rural villagers, who were little accustomed to being addressed with respect by individuals in positions of power. By addressing the villagers, discussing their problems, and requesting their assistance, the Maoists encouraged the villagers to be active political agents, a radical departure from villagers' previous experiences of marginalization. Boasting of their successes, the Maoists also sought to create an impression of strength that would generate a bandwagon effect by affecting individuals' perceptions of rebel strength (cf. Kuran 1989; Lichbach 1998; McCormick and Giordano 2007).

The CPN-M employed localized strategies for conveying its complex ideological ideas, using local idiom and references which did not require previous political education or literacy. Moreover, different rhetorical strategies were employed by the Maoists depending on the villagers' backgrounds, tailoring their rhetoric to the audience at the same time as they were careful to always couch their discussion in a Maoist discourse.[23] This rhetorical strategy helped to build a common Maoist identity, an essential element for maintaining a cohesive group. The Maoists' portrayal of their ideology was especially appealing to rural individuals since it matched well with individuals' own local agendas and grievances. Many of those who joined had previously supported other communist parties, but found these

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[23] The theoretical literature about framing (Benford and Snow 2000; McAdam et al. 1997; Snow et al. 1986) suggests that leaders can shape and exploit identities for mobilization. Constructivist ideas about framing have not been incorporated into the rebellion literature to the extent that they have been in the broader social movement literature (cf. Suurmond 2005). Some ongoing research, however, has begun to apply a framing approach to the peace process in Nepal (Björnehed 2008)

parties to be ineffective and unable to bring about substantive change, which increased the appeal of the Maoists' radical agenda and violent tactics.

The essay concludes by noting that the Maoists also used other recruitment tactics, such as coercion, and suggests that these other recruitment paths also warrant analysis. It also notes that the extent to which these differing tactics were employed varied throughout the conflict. A prima facie reading of the conflict suggests that the early years of the People's War saw careful recruitment of only highly committed individuals but as the conflict developed, newly recruited cadres were reportedly less ideologically devoted, and the CPN-M was less committed to educating these recruits on its ideology.[24] This indicates that the CPN-M shifted its recruitment strategy over the course of the conflict, making it anything but static.

Conclusion

Because the essays in this dissertation were each written as distinct articles addressing different gaps in the literature, they each have their own contribution. Together, however, they make several joint contributions to the literature by addressing a number of the gaps identified in previous research, and suggest a number of implications for future research.

Addressing the Gaps

Essays I, III, and IV all attempt to move beyond the assumption of the individual as the only relevant unit of analysis. Essay I incorporates both individual and group perspectives in the theoretical argument, producing arguments regarding why ethnic mobilization should be associated with rebel recruitment both due to leadership strategies (manpower investment in recruitment, exploiting existing networks) and to individual calculations (security dilemma, social incentives). Essay III examines rebel group agency by modeling its choice of strategy and examining what factors will cause leaders to shift from voluntary to coerced recruitment strategies. Likewise, Essay IV also puts the focus on rebel group agency by examining how a rebel group can use indoctrination as a successful recruitment tactic. In doing so, the essays suggest that there is a great deal of analytical leverage to be had by employing the rebel group as the unit of analysis.

Several of the essays also seek to move beyond the assumption of free choice in participation. Essays III and IV acknowledge that there is not always free choice in participation, and that recruitment can be viewed as a

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[24] This reading is supported by the findings from Essay III that coerced recruitment increased as the conflict progressed.

continuum ranging from totally voluntary to forced participation. Essay III focuses on the topic of coercive recruitment, or when the threat of violence, whether explicit or implicit, affects an individual's decision to join. As a measure for coercion it used data on abductions that had the aim of pressuring individuals into the group; thus this behavior falls somewhere on the continuum as a form of involuntary enlistment, though not at gunpoint. As a mild subversion of free choice, indoctrination (Essay IV) arguably also falls somewhere on this continuum. Even Essays I and II take note of non-voluntary facets of participation when discussing the how the ethnic security dilemma or government repression can drive participation patterns; while ostensibly voluntary, individuals driven by security concerns participate in rebellion not because they support the aims of the group but because these concerns impel them to do so.

Essays III and IV sought to go beyond the assumption of path dependency in rebel recruitment to develop more dynamic models of recruitment which acknowledge that tactics can shift over time. The results of both of these essays demonstrate clearly that in the Nepal case, the assumption of path dependency does not hold. Prima facie evidence from other cases discussed in Essay III also supports the contention that static models are wholly inappropriate when studying recruitment. Conflict dynamics lead to shifts in the recruitment environment to which rebel groups must adjust; in order to secure a continued source of manpower, groups must adopt new strategies when necessary.

All of the essays also sought to improve the theoretical bases of participation by either specifying the logic of existing, largely implicit, arguments regarding participation, or by producing new theoretical ideas regarding participation and recruitment. Essays I and II seek to make existing arguments about rebel participation more explicit and to elaborate on causal stories that are largely implicit in the civil war literature. Essays III and IV sought to develop new theoretical paths by investigating rebel group tactics that have received little attention in the existing literature. Both essays provide a number of new theoretical insights into the processes of coercion and indoctrination in recruitment.

Essays I and III attempt to address the largely overlooked relationship between participation and conflict dynamics by integrating recruitment and conflict violence into the same model. In Essay I recruitment serves as an explanatory variable by examining how a particular type of recruitment—that which occurs along ethnic lines—affects the likelihood of conflict intensification. In Essay III, on the other hand, recruitment serves as the dependent variable by looking at how battlefield violence affects the level of coerced recruitment. Essay IV touches on this topic briefly as well when it discusses how indoctrination became less important in recruitment efforts as the conflict escalated.

Finally, the dissertation also addressed the lack of systematic cross-national empirical testing of participation. By collecting new data on rebel troop size for all rebel groups active between 1946 and 2007, Essay II was able to examine arguments from previous research regarding the level of participation. This is the only cross-national study to examine levels of participation directly as the dependent variable. Essay III takes a micro-level approach of using district-level data within a single country to study the use of coercion in recruitment, also the first systematic study of its kind.

Implications for Future Research

Collectively, there are several theoretical implications from these essays, but there are also tensions between them. In terms of the collective action paradigm, none of the essays found that material selective incentives led to increased levels of participation. Social incentives, on the other hand, received mixed support. In Essay I, ethnic mobilization was found to correlate with higher levels of violence, and I explained this finding as being largely due to the ability of leaders to better harness recruitment opportunities in contexts where participants could be identified along ethnic lines. At the same time, Essay II found no support for the contention that ethnically mobilized conflicts led to higher numbers of troops. Essay II suggested that these conflicting results may be resolved by taking into account the level of violence, and posits that leaders that mobilize along ethnic lines may deliberately use more aggressive and costly military tactics to signal resolve since they know that they will be able to easily replace the lost troops; this suggestion is only conjecture, but it indicates a path for future research. Similarly, Essay IV noted that rebel leaders attempted to exploit ethnic identity as a social incentive in recruitment, but met with limited success; the building of an ideological community through indoctrination, however, generated a far more positive response. The combined results from these essays provide mixed support to the idea that ethnic mobilization is an effective recruitment tactic, and suggest that the role of ethnicity in recruitment requires far more research before definitive conclusions can be drawn. Moreover, ethnic mobilization itself can be interpreted in numerous ways: both as a social incentive that helps to solve the free-rider problem and as a purely organizational factor that affects the recruitment environment by easing the identification of constituents (or, from the perspective of the government, enemies). These alternate interpretations also make it difficult to parse out the theoretical mechanisms connecting ethnic mobilization to recruitment.

The essays also suggested that using coercion as a solution to the collective actions problem is an effective, but ultimately suboptimal solution. Groups using coercion pay heavy costs that they usually seek to avoid; for this reason, coercion is often a last resort method for garnering participation.

Contrasting Essay III and Essay IV raises the question of how one should view indoctrination. Is it a mild form of coercion, a type of brainwashing that robs individuals of their free choice? Or is it a means for groups to evoke purposive incentives, to guide individuals into positions of pleasurable agency (Wood 2003)? One could argue both positions, and observers of the Nepal conflict often do. The conceptual tension between indoctrination and coercion points to the difficulties in pinning down definitive theoretical labels on many of the recruitment tactics groups employ. It is also important to note that the conclusions drawn in Essays III and IV are based on a single case, indicating that the theoretical generalizations drawn from these studies should be seen as tentative until supported by additional comparative research.

Essay II suggests support for arguments that security concerns are imperative in determining participation in rebellion. The relationship, however, does not appear to be a simple one. It is not the case that the higher the level of state repression, the more people fear for their safety, and thus the greater the levels of participation in rebel groups. Essay II shows that it is in fact intermediate levels of repression that are correlated with larger troop sizes. At the same time, Essay II remains agnostic as to which causal story can best explain this relationship. This finding suggests that more careful theorizing and analysis be done on how state repression works to encourage or prohibit participation. The results from the dissertation also suggest a broad need to examine how structural and proximate causes interact to affect recruitment practices.

While several of the essays in this dissertation have addressed the topic of how conflict violence and recruitment strategies intersect, far more can be done. While the endogeneity inherent in the relationship is a methodological burden, there are numerous opportunities to provide more nuanced and dynamic models which incorporate other facets of conflict dynamics besides violence. Bargaining theories may be useful in this context to understand how the incentives to use various recruitment tactics shift depending on the bargaining space, the information revealed on the battlefield, and signals sent between the parties. Understanding why rebel groups employ various recruitment tactics may provide valuable information, for example, regarding whether the party is committed to violence or whether the moment is ripe for negotiations.

The results also indicate the necessity of developing more precisely specified models in the civil war literature. As long as participation (and other causal mechanisms) remain black-boxed and excluded from the models, the field will have to tolerate theoretical equifinality. The results here suggest that civil war researchers must re-think a number of the theoretical stories which they have provided. When participation is not correlated with prominent explanatory variables from the civil war literature—like selective incentives—then researchers have two choices.

Either they must focus on other causal mechanisms to explain the correlation, or they must nuance the participation mechanism. As long as researchers persist in underspecifying the participation mechanism, it will remain difficult to provide convincing explanations for the correlations found in the large-N civil war literature. The essays in this dissertation suggest that researchers should resist the temptation to assert participation in vague terms. Essay II addresses participation in terms of absolute numbers, but concludes that thresholds of participation may be critical to understanding recruitment patterns in civil war, an idea that has recently been suggested elsewhere as well (Fearon forthcoming).

The case of Nepal was chosen because only a single rebel group was active, which helped to ensure analytical clarity in understanding its decisions. Yet the empirical record suggests that many conflict zones experience multiple conflicts or multiple rebel groups within the same conflict. In this sort of environment, groups must compete for recruits, adding additional complexity to the choice of recruitment tactics. Whether and how recruitment practices vary in complex environments warrants theorizing. How do groups attract recruits with selective incentives in competition with other groups? Are market analogies useful in this setting? What opportunities are there for groups to employ coercive measures in such an environment?

Finally, the empirical record on participation needs to be strengthened. The literature on recruitment is burgeoning, with the recent publication of several important case study works, such as Petersen (2001), Wood (2003), and Weinstein (2007), as well as a growing body of ex-combatant surveys that are underway in conflict and post-conflict countries throughout the world. But the literature has seen little systematic cross-national work, making it difficult to draw generalizations. Several of the essays in this dissertation have begun to explore this gap, but they should be replicated and expanded. Part of the problem with global studies lies in difficulties accessing good data on recruitment practices; even within a given case, this often poses considerable challenges. But there are facets of recruitment that can be captured and studied in a cross-national setting, and these should be exploited in future empirical work. My hope is that the essays here inspire others to develop more nuanced and innovative theoretical models that can be tested using comparative data.

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