

Let the Right Ones In: How Militant Groups Can Attract Committed Recruits

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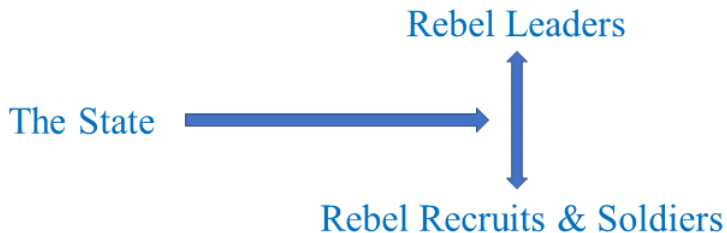
Rebels in Truce



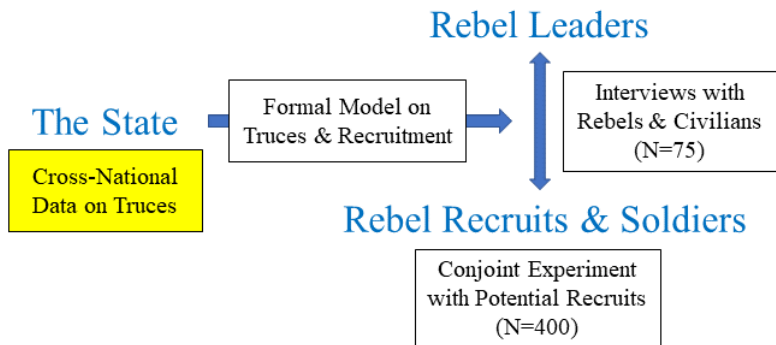
Main Argument

- ① Truces make life easier on rebels.
- ② Material benefits attract low-commitment recruits.
- ③ Low-commitment soldiers desert, defect, and disobey.

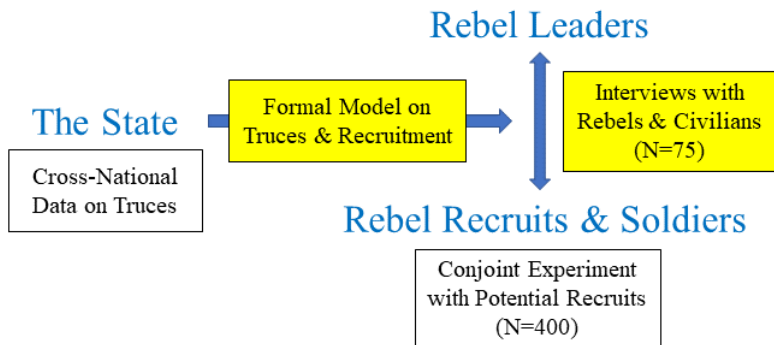
Research Approaches



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Rebel Groups Must Attract the Right Recruits

- **Recruits' motivations vary**

“I wanted to protect my village.”

“I wanted to hold a gun and be rich.”

— Two former NSCN-K cadres on why they joined

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- **Uncommitted recruits cause huge problems for rebel groups**

Desertion (Lyllal 2014, Staniland 2014)

Defection (Kalyvas 2006, Larson and Lewis n.d.)

Civilian abuse (Weinstein 2007, Wood 2009)

Spoiling (Kydd and Walter 2002, Daly 2016)

Hypotheses: Recruits' Motivations

- **Material Rewards**

Low-commitment recruits should be more attracted by material rewards (wages, accommodations, lifestyle perks) than **high-commitment recruits** are.

- **Truce Offers**

Low-commitment recruits should be more attracted by truce offers (safety) than **high-commitment recruits** are.

Alternate Theories of Recruitment and Control

- **Rewards and Punishments**

Low-commitment recruits should be more deterred by strict disciplinary systems than **high-commitment recruits** are.

- **Extremist Ideology**

High-commitment recruits should be more attracted by extremist ideology than **low-commitment recruits** are.

Setting: Separatist Conflicts in Northeast India



Subjects: Potential Recruits



Community Orgs

Ethnic volunteer groups
Active in community service
No political or rebel ties

Public Gathering Places

Main roads of towns /
villages
Near rebel camps
Moonshiners and stadiums

Would someone like you join this group?

Strong (5,000 soldiers)



Strict Discipline



Leaders from the Same Tribe

tribe ✓ region ✓

Leaders Want to Make a Peace Deal with the Government



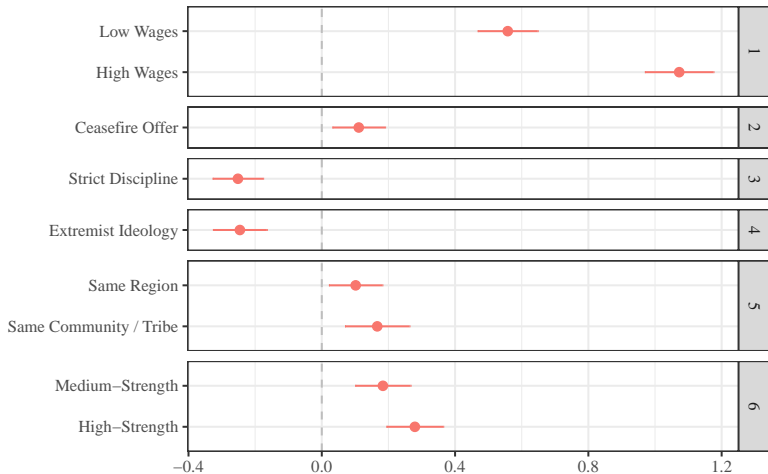
Offers High Wages, Good Lifestyle



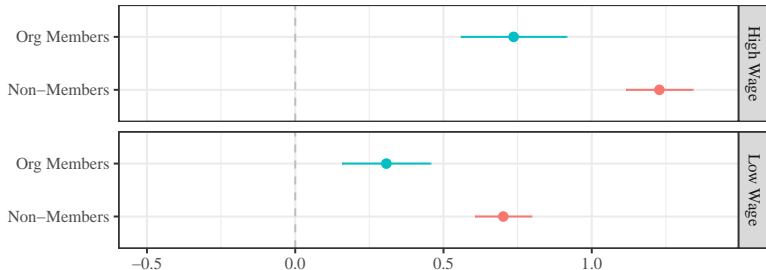
Would someone like you join this group?

<i>Trait</i>	<i>Possibilities</i>
Wages / Lifestyle	Offers no wages, hard lifestyle Offers small wages, OK lifestyle Offers high wages, good lifestyle
Truce Offer	Government has offered ceasefire Government has refused to offer ceasefire
Disciplinary Reputation	Loose Discipline Strict Discipline
Ideology	Leaders want to negotiate peace deal Leaders want to keep fighting until independence
Social Connections	Leaders from different region Different community in same region Same community
Strength	Weak (200 troops) Medium-Strength (1,000 troops) Strong (5,000 troops)

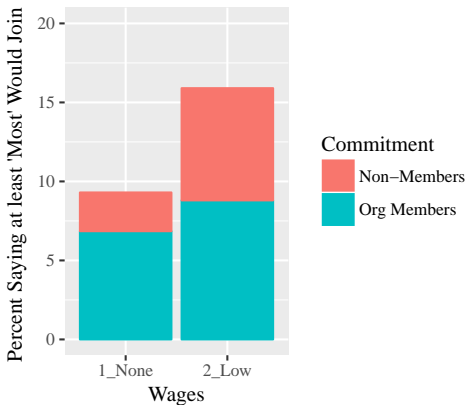
Overall Effect of Each Factor



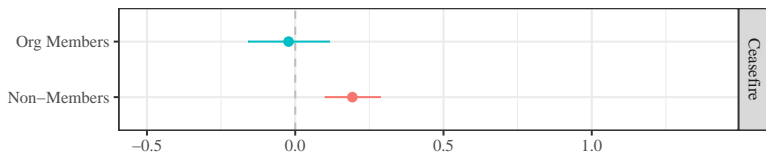
Material Rewards Attract Uncommitted Recruits



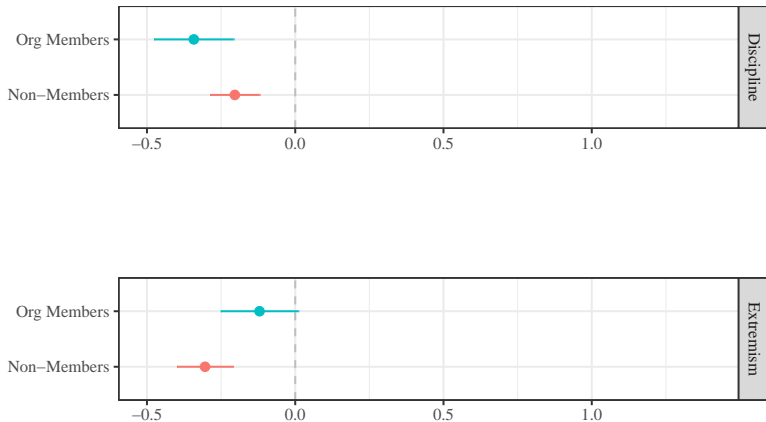
Material Rewards Attract Uncommitted Recruits



Truce Offers Attract Uncommitted Recruits



Alternatives: Discipline and Extremism



Major Takeaways

- 1 **For Governments:** Forbearance undermines rebel organizations.
- 2 **For Rebels:** Organizational discipline is more fragile than it appears.
- 3 **For Peacebuilders:** Reducing violence does not always bring peace or protect civilians.