



## **Asymmetry, Relationality and Networks of Power: Rethinking the Dynamics of Legitimacy and Illegitimacy in Intrastate Conflict**

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Authors	Schoon, Eric William
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ASYMMETRY, RELATIONALITY AND NETWORKS OF POWER: RETHINKING THE  
DYNAMICS OF LEGITIMACY AND ILLEGITIMACY IN INTRASTATE CONFLICT

by

Eric W. Schoon

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As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Eric W. Schoon, titled *Asymmetry, Relationality and Networks of Power: Rethinking the Dynamics of Legitimacy and Illegitimacy in Intrastate Conflict* and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: (Enter Date)  
Ronald L. Breiger

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: (Enter Date)  
Joseph Galaskiewicz

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: (Enter Date)  
Robin Stryker

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: (Enter Date)  
Charles Ragin

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: (Enter Date)  
Dissertation Director: Ronald L. Breiger

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**DEDICATION**

For Myriam



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## ABSTRACT

From academic scholarship to military policy and international law, legitimacy is regarded as critical in shaping the course and outcome of violent political conflict. Yet, our understanding of the conditions for legitimacy and its effects in the context of armed conflict has been limited by multiple challenges and inconsistencies. My dissertation addresses longstanding debates in the literature on armed conflict by turning attention to two key features of legitimation: the asymmetry between legitimacy and illegitimacy, and the relationality of legitimation. I argue that these concepts, which have been theoretically and empirically overlooked or underdeveloped in research on armed conflict, offer a path to overcoming the challenges associated with the study of legitimacy in this context. I advance this claim through three studies. The first study empirically develops the assertion that while the conditions for legitimacy vary by case, the conditions for illegitimacy transcend regional contexts, representing a more global phenomenon. Comparative analyses of 30 cases of civil conflict from 1978 to 2008 reveals significant patterns across space and time in the conditions for civilian perceptions that government sanctioned violence is illegitimate. And yet, consistent with existing literature, my analyses revealed no patterning in the conditions for legitimacy. Through historical research into the details of these 30 cases, I identify three general mechanisms that result in perceptions of illegitimacy. The second study turns attention to the effects of illegitimacy for violent non-state groups. Using historical and discursive data, I examine the effects of illegitimacy at this level through an in-depth study of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey. I introduce important correctives to existing theories, examining the cumulative effects of multiple sources of legitimation and showing that illegitimacy can provide much needed flexibility for oppositional groups. The third study examines the causes and conditions that lead to intrastate conflict recurrence. Combining

quantitative analyses with comparative and historical research, I identify four distinctive pathways to conflict recurrence. I show how the conditions associated with each pathway shape the networks in which relationships of legitimacy and illegitimacy are embedded, and I discuss how these conditions mediate the effects of legitimacy and illegitimacy on conflict recurrence. By focusing on the asymmetry and relationality of legitimacy and illegitimacy, this work engages fundamental assumptions that are widely taken for granted and overlooked in scholarship on legitimacy in violent conflict and suggests significant revisions to existing theories of legitimation in armed conflict. Through this shift, my research identifies previously unobserved patterns in how evaluations of rightness and acceptability are made across space and time, allowing us to better understand the power dynamics that shape and constrain the networks of actors engaged in armed conflict.

## INTRODUCTION

Legitimacy is widely understood as critical in shaping the dynamics of armed conflict. Research has identified legitimacy as a driving force in initiating armed conflict (Goldstone 2008; Luard 1986; Wimmer and Min 2006), in shaping how armed conflict is fought (Holmes 1980; McFate and Jackson 2006; Paul, Clarke and Grill 2010), and in determining how conflicts conclude and whether they will recur (Bakker, Raab and Milward 2012; Call 2012). From questions surrounding the legitimate use of violence by a state to how the legitimacy of the actors involved in the conflict should be defined, this single construct has influenced centuries of thought on war and state-violence (see Weber 2004 [1920]; Zelditch 2001: 4).

Why is legitimacy so central to the study of armed conflict? At a fundamental level, political conflict can be understood as a struggle over power. Whether it is the power to govern, the power to control material resources, or the power to achieve some other end, conflicts erupt when one or more parties seeks to change the existing structure of power through violence. While power can be exercised and control retained through acts of violence or coercion alone, power in the absence of legitimacy requires a significant and continued expenditure of resources and lacks stability (see Emerson 1962; Weber (1978 [1922])). Power that is viewed as legitimate faces less opposition, has a greater capacity to garner support and facilitates trust in uncertain situations (Beetham 1991[2013]: xi). For actors engaged in armed conflict, legitimacy allows them to shift their social, material and economic resources away from accruing or maintaining power and instead focus those resources on achieving other ends.

While in some cases power and legitimacy go hand in hand, giving an actor authority (i.e. legitimate power; see Emerson 1962), during periods of rebellion, civil war, revolution or other

forms of intrastate conflict the legitimacy of existing power structures is called into question. While a loss of legitimacy does not necessarily mean a loss of power, it does require power-holders to devote resources to retaining control. Often this is not done in isolation. Diverse actors who are invested in a given regime might support the regime while others may support the opposition, drawing together extensive networks of actors with complex and often dynamic relationships. The shift away from established authority towards more overt exercises of power calls legitimacy into question and while power can come from material sources or external support, legitimacy must be achieved. As a result, while conflicts can be fought and won through the sheer exercise of military force, successful resolution occurs only when authority is established, which requires legitimacy (e.g., Call 2012). While the dynamics of power typically stand at the center of scholarship on war and violence, legitimacy and illegitimacy fundamentally mediate those dynamics. It is precisely because legitimacy cannot be bought and sold that some have argued that war is fundamentally a contest of legitimacy (see Bakker, et al. 2012; Beck 2011)

Yet, while legitimacy is a persistent theme in much of the literature on armed conflict—and in particular, the sociological literature on war (see Wimmer 2014)—the use of legitimacy as an analytic construct is controversial (Gilley 2006). Writing in reference to the use of legitimacy in organizational theory, Mark Suchman (1995: 573) notes that “legitimacy is more often invoked than described, and it is more often described than defined.” The same can be said of legitimacy in the study of armed conflict. Broadly defined, legitimacy is the assumption or perception that something is right, proper or appropriate according to “some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (Suchman 1995: 574). As this definition suggests, evaluations of legitimacy can vary widely across geographical, political and cultural

contexts. This mutability has led some scholars to eschew the use of legitimacy in analyses of war and conflict (e.g., Easton 1975; O’Kane 1993; Przeworski 1986; Skockpol 1979), and as Gilley (2006: xii) notes, repeated calls have been made to abandon the use of legitimacy in political analyses all together.

Nevertheless, the importance of legitimacy for understanding conflict processes is continually reified. Beyond academic debates, the centrality of legitimacy to armed conflict is written into national policies and military guidelines. As the United States Government Counterinsurgency Guide states, “Strategies will usually be focused primarily on the population rather than the enemy and will seek to reinforce the legitimacy of the affected government...” (U.S. Government Interagency Counterinsurgency Initiative 2009: 2). Moreover, legitimacy plays a central role in public discourse surrounding violent conflicts. This was pointedly illustrated in July 2013, when leaders of the Egyptian Military called for “a return to revolutionary legitimacy,” while leaders of the democratically-elected Muslim Brotherhood called on the people “to rally to defend constitutional legitimacy...” (Fayed and Taylor 2013) as political tensions escalated to violent protests and a bloody coup.

In an effort to bridge the gap between the importance of legitimacy to the study of armed conflict and the methodological and conceptual issues associated with the study of legitimacy, I advance and empirically develop two key claims. First, I argue that while legitimacy and illegitimacy are symmetrically defined, their causes and effects are asymmetric. As such, legitimacy and illegitimacy should be studied as related but distinct phenomena in the analysis of armed conflict. Second, building on what previous scholars have identified as the fundamental relationality of legitimacy (e.g., Dornbusch and Scott 1975; Emerson 1962), I argue that legitimacy should be studied as a network construct. As Johnson, Dowd and Ridgway (2006)

note, legitimation is a process, and previous research has shown it must be both conferred and received (see Zelditch 2001). However, the relationality of legitimation has been largely overlooked in research on armed conflict, and the complex networks in which it is embedded have gone uninterrogated.

As I detail below, the asymmetry and relationality of legitimacy and illegitimacy follow an intuitive logic that is consistent with previous research. However, I show that treating these claims as central to the analysis of legitimacy allows us to move beyond some of the most intractable challenges in understanding how legitimation affects conflict processes, the networks of actors engaged in conflicts, and the shifting dynamics of power within those networks. While the empirical scope of this dissertation is necessarily limited, the analyses presented herein provide a foundation for continued research in this area, suggesting new conceptual and methodological approaches to the study of legitimacy.

### **The Challenges of Legitimacy**

The challenges associated with the study of legitimation in armed conflict are multiple, ranging from methodological issues associated with measuring perceptions during times of significant social upheaval, to the theoretical challenge of deciphering how perceptions of rightness and acceptability are mediated by broader material and social conditions. However, three issues stand out as having limited the systematic and cumulative empirical analysis of legitimacy in armed conflict: the contextual contingency of legitimacy, the focus on legitimacy as either attribute or process, and the unanswered question of legitimacy's role as a necessary versus sufficient condition for producing key outcomes.

### *Contextual Contingency*

One of the greatest challenges to the study of legitimacy is the high degree of contextual variation in how evaluations of legitimacy are made. While an extensive body of scholarship has identified generalizable principles that shape legitimation processes, these principles consistently recognize that certain core assumptions are contingent on contextual factors. In her overview of approaches to the study of legitimacy in the social sciences, Stryker (1994) identifies three disparate themes regarding how legitimacy should be defined and analyzed,<sup>1</sup> each of which implicitly identifies mechanisms that produce legitimacy. Articulating these distinctions Stryker (1994: 855) writes that researchers who define legitimacy as attitudinal approval—represented by a favorable affective orientation—focus on normative mechanisms for producing legitimacy, insofar as actors internalize the conditions for legitimacy. Legitimacy as behavioral consent favors instrumental mechanisms insofar as consent is conditioned on the provision of material resources. Finally, scholars who treat legitimacy as a cognitive orientation focus on constitutive mechanisms. As Stryker writes,

“The cognitive orientation approach to legitimacy distinguishes between the concept of validity, the ‘collective orientation to a binding rule,’ and the concept of propriety, ‘an individual’s approval of the rule’... validity presumes neither normative consensus nor a uniformity of belief among individuals... [it] implies only the recognition of rules, not approval of those rules. The ‘constitutive’ effect of a valid rule is that actors conform to it because they recognize it as binding...”

(Stryker 1994: 857).

Whether focusing on norms, pragmatic benefits, or the constitutive effect of socially binding rules, the mechanisms that drive evaluations of legitimacy are as mutable as the social



context in which the evaluations are made (see also Johnson et al. 2006). This reliance on contextual norms is more explicitly expressed by Beetham (1991), who writes, “The criteria distinguished [in this framework for legitimacy] constitute only the most general framework, the specific content or substance of which has to be ‘filled in’ for each historical society.” (Beetham 1991: 21).

This assumption that legitimacy is contingent on local contexts finds wide affirmation across areas of study, including scholarship on the legitimacy of violence and legitimacy in armed conflict. Within scholarship on the legitimacy of violence, realist perspectives (e.g., Schweller and Wholforth 2000; Waltz 2000) assert that a state’s use of violence is legitimate when its use is in the best interest of the state. Moreover, proponents of the just war tradition (e.g., Holmes 1989; Luban 1980), who generally seek a more global framework for the justification of state violence, rely on the legitimacy of a state in determining whether acts of violence are legitimate, implying a high degree of context dependence.

The contextual contingency of legitimacy is similarly evident across research on armed conflict in sociology, political science and public policy, which typically focus attention on the legitimacy of an actor rather than the legitimacy of their acts (see Wimmer 2014). In his research into the causes of ethnic conflict, Wimmer (2013) argues that ethnic conflict is driven by violations of the like-over-like principle of political legitimacy, whereby constituents are ruled by co-ethnics. However, as he articulates in his earlier work, the concept of ethnicity is multiplex, mutable, and variably salient depending on the social and political context (see Wimmer 2008). In a different vein, Goldstone (2008) argues that state failure is driven by a combined loss of legitimacy and effectiveness by a state, and defines legitimacy as approval of the state’s actions by elites and the general population.

While generalized and highly insightful frameworks for legitimacy have identified constitutive components of legitimation (for reviews, see Johnson, et al. 2006; Zelditch 2001), the underlying mechanisms that guide any given evaluative process are nevertheless determined case by case. This has led many scholars of conflict and peace studies to adopt what Heathershaw (2009: 7) refers to as a subjectivist approach in which “legitimacy is to a large extent in the eye of the beholder, and not fixed to any external standard” (Bakker, et al. 2012: 48), or “is what the people believe it is” (Roy 2004: 175). A consequence of adopting a subjectivist approach in research on armed conflict is that it meaningfully limits the degree to which research is generalizable across cases and contexts. As such, what we learn about how legitimacy operates in Afghanistan (e.g., Roy 2004) may have little bearing on any other cultural context beyond the overly general assertion that legitimacy matters. In an effort to balance sensitivity to subjectivism and the need for generalizability, multiple scholars have introduced more general approaches to defining and evaluating legitimacy, such as Wimmer’s (2013) like-over-like principle of political legitimacy that is operant in ethnic conflict, or Call’s (2012) legitimacy-as-political-exclusion that affects governmental stability. However, in each case the frameworks remain limited to the context in which they were developed.

#### *Legitimacy as Process and Attribute*

Beyond contextual variation, another key challenge to the study of legitimacy in armed conflict is the treatment of legitimacy as either a process (e.g., Johnson, et al. 2006) or an attribute (e.g., Gilley 2006). In their review of the literature on legitimacy in organizational theory and social psychology, Johnson and colleagues (2006) argue that to understand legitimacy, we must evaluate it as a process whereby something is construed as legitimate. This process approach examines how something *becomes* legitimate, and stands at the core of

research on legitimacy in peace building and conflict resolution (e.g., Call 2012). A more common approach in literature on armed conflict is the treatment of legitimacy as an attribute, which actors or actions either have or do not (e.g., Wimmer 2014). For example, as noted above, Goldstone (2008) argues that a loss of legitimacy and efficacy lead to state failure, and while legitimacy can be gained or lost, the focus of his work is on how the presence or absence of legitimacy shape broader social processes rather than the processes by which legitimacy is achieved.

As Goldstone's (2008) work illustrates, legitimacy as a process and legitimacy as an attribute go hand-in-hand. Rather than representing a dichotomy they indicate different focuses of analysis, the former examining the conditions for legitimacy while the latter examines its effects. But what is lost in this dual focus on processes and attributes is any explicit or systematic treatment of how the dynamics and effects of legitimation vary based on the source of legitimacy. While sources of legitimacy are often mentioned by researchers, running the gamut from elites and the population (Goldstone 2008) to international organizations (Bakker, et al. 2012) or co-ethnics (Wimmer, et al. 2009), they are typically addressed as a scope condition rather than an issue with meaningful theoretical importance.

This is problematic in the context of armed conflict given that legitimacy as an attribute is violently contested and the process of gaining legitimacy is typically unsettled. In any armed conflict there are all but inevitably multiple entities that are simultaneously perceived as legitimate by some but illegitimate by others, and the conditions for legitimacy may systematically vary within these networks based on those contested dynamics. This is well illustrated by the case of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa. In their insightful analysis of factors that affect the resilience of dark networks,<sup>2</sup> Bakker et al. (2011)

argue that a critical factor for the success of the ANC was their involvement in international accords, which increased their legitimacy within the international community. However, while their involvement in the international arena afforded them a degree of legitimacy, this did not make them legitimate in the eyes of the South African government or the civilians that opposed them. Moreover, the process of gaining legitimacy within the international community was necessarily different than the subsequent process of gaining legitimacy in South Africa, which was shaped by a protracted conflict resolution and ultimate victory in national elections.

As this example illustrates, these contested dynamics make the systematic examination of the networks through which legitimacy is conferred and received necessary for developing generalizable research. However, these dynamics have been widely overlooked.

#### *Necessity and Sufficiency of Legitimacy*

As noted above, legitimacy has been identified as motivating conflict onset, shaping conflict processes, and impacting the conclusion and recurrence of armed conflict. Wimmer and Min (2006) argue that changes in the form of political legitimacy (e.g., from theocracy to empire, or empire to autocracy) are strongly associated with the onset of conflict. An extensive literature on counterinsurgency argues that fostering the legitimacy of the affected government is one of the key priorities for counterinsurgency strategies (see McFate and Jackson 2006; Paul, et al. 2010). Further, Call (2012) argues that the central cause of civil war recurrence is exclusion and political illegitimacy.

While this scholarship provides important insights into the dynamics of legitimacy, it is rarely clear and even more rarely addressed whether legitimacy or illegitimacy are necessary or sufficient conditions for producing these observed outcomes. Necessary conditions are those that are causally relevant in all cases where a given outcome is produced, while a sufficient condition

is one that can itself produce the outcome regardless of the other conditions that are present (see Ragin 2000: 91). As Ragin (2000: 90-96) highlights, these two concepts are central to determining the (non-probabilistic) generalizability of comparative research.

Quantitative research that speaks to questions of legitimacy in conflict typically incorporates a range of control variables along with measures of legitimacy (e.g., Wimmer and Min 2006; Wimmer, et al. 2009), thus indicating an assumption that legitimacy is perhaps necessary, but insufficient. Conversely, Call's (2012) thesis on illegitimacy and civil war recurrence frames illegitimacy as an unnecessary but sufficient condition for renewing conflict. Yet, the ways in which the effects of legitimacy and illegitimacy are shaped and mediated by other material and social conditions—and thus, their necessity or sufficiency—has gone effectively overlooked.

The failure to adequately situate the effects of legitimacy within the broader material and social context of armed conflicts has made it easier for critics to dismiss the relevance of legitimacy altogether, arguing that the same outcomes can be better studied by examining more concrete conditions (e.g., Kurzman 2004; Skocpol 1979). This is consistent with a large body of research in political science that eschews legitimacy in the analyses of war (see Wimmer 2014: 175), while developing highly compelling models with robust empirical support to explain the same conflict processes that are the subject of research focused on legitimacy (e.g., Fearon and Laitin 2003; Walter 2004; Kreutz 2010). In light of the challenges of contextual contingency and the issues associated with legitimacy contests, it is unsurprising that there is little systematic focus on how legitimacy and illegitimacy interact with and are shaped by other conditions. However, the failure to fully interrogate the necessity versus sufficiency of legitimacy and

illegitimacy stands as a significant impediment to the empirical study of legitimacy and obfuscates how legitimation affects the nuanced power dynamics in armed conflict.

### **Asymmetry and Relationality in the Study of Legitimacy**

While these challenges highlight key limitations that have affected the way legitimacy is studied in armed conflict, they also highlight important facets of legitimacy and legitimation processes that guide the research presented here. In this section, I will introduce the concepts of asymmetry and relationality as they pertain to the study of legitimacy, and discuss their capacity for addressing the challenges outlined above.

#### *The Asymmetry of Legitimacy*

Legitimacy and illegitimacy are complementary terms and, as I detail in Appendix A, they are defined in opposition to one another. While definitions of legitimacy vary widely, illegitimacy is consistently defined as its opposite or absence. As a result of this definitional symmetry, the dynamics of illegitimacy have gone largely overlooked under the assumption that legitimacy and illegitimacy are merely two sides of the same construct, and the causes and effects of one are presumed to be the inverse of the causes and effects of the other.

Yet, while symmetry between legitimacy and illegitimacy is widely presumed, a review of international laws pertaining to armed conflict and scholarship on the legitimacy of violence suggests otherwise. While there is no shortage of scholarship exploring conditions for legitimacy—from the legitimate use of force against terrorism (e.g. Charney 2001) to the legitimate use of torture (e.g. Brooks 2004)—prescriptive definitions of legitimacy that are framed in positive terms (e.g., what one *should* do) exhibit the same variability and contextual contingency so widely observed in empirical research on legitimacy. However, this is not necessarily the case when prescriptions are framed in the negative. To illustrate, below is the

entire text of article 35 (*Basic Rules*) of Part III Section 1 on the *Methods and Means of Warfare* from Geneva Protocol 1, Articles 35-40:

“1. In any armed conflict, the right of the Parties to the conflict to choose methods or means of warfare *is not unlimited*.

“2. *It is prohibited* to employ weapons, projectiles and material and methods of warfare of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering.

“3. *It is prohibited* to employ methods or means of warfare which are intended, or may be expected, to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment.” (Geneva Protocol I, Article 35, 1977; emphasis added).

The Geneva Conventions and Protocols define the standards for appropriate treatment of persons in armed conflict (both domestic and international). While these conventions broadly seek to affirm the rights and humanity of agents involved in conflict, as we see here, the specifications of global rules for the appropriate use of violence are largely defined as prohibitions.

As Sjoberg and Cain (1971; Sjoberg et al. 2003) argue, the negation of a social phenomenon is empirically more identifiable than the presence—or positive counterpart—of a given social phenomenon. As such, while legitimacy may be highly contingent on context, illegitimacy may not be subject to the same degree of variation. This was articulated by McWilliams (2011[1971]) in his essay, *On Political Illegitimacy*. He writes, “Illegitimacy becomes central in times of uncertainty because men can agree about things they believe to be wrong even when they cannot agree or are unsure about what is right.” (McWilliams 2011 [1971]: 243).<sup>3</sup> Consistent with Sjoberg and colleagues (Sjoberg and Cain 1971; Sjoberg et al. 2003), this suggests that illegitimacy is more widely shared than perceptions of legitimacy, and may provide a greater degree of conceptual and analytical clarity than legitimacy.

### *The Relationality of Legitimacy*

As the discussion presented to this point indicates, legitimacy and illegitimacy do not exist in a vacuum but instead are conferred by actors engaged in an evaluative process. Whether the evaluation is of an action or another actor occupying a set role, legitimacy requires an audience. The relational element of legitimacy is implicitly recognized each time the source of legitimacy is specified. In studies of counterinsurgency (e.g., Paul, et al. 2010) the source of legitimacy is almost invariably the civilian population, whereas studies of states sometimes focus on legitimacy in the eyes of the general populace or in the eyes of elites (e.g., Goldstone 2008). As noted above, others have focused on legitimacy in the eyes of external states or international non-governmental organizations (e.g., Bakker, et al. 2012). In each case, these sources of legitimacy imply a relationship, and while legitimacy is generally understood as a collective evaluation, the boundaries of the collective must be defined.

This relationality is similarly represented in organizational research examining the effects of legitimacy on organizational outcomes. In his research on the social processes that produce penalties for illegitimate role performance, Zuckerman (1999) operationalizes legitimacy via the relationship between businesses and securities analysts, showing that failure to gain recognition by securities analysts indicates illegitimate role performance on the part of the business. This relational framework, whereby legitimacy is represented by an audience's acceptance of a collective actor as fitting into a given identity or social category, is consistent across the literature on organizational identities (e.g., Hsu, Hannan and Koçak 2009; Hsu, Hannan and Polos 2011).

While the relationality of legitimacy is widely recognized, extant scholarship has focused almost exclusively on dyadic relationships and overlooked the potential network effects that are



implied. As discussed above, this is particularly relevant in the study of armed conflict where the contested legitimacy of an actor or actions is the focus of study. Within such a context, it seems improbable that dyadic relationships would adequately explain the effects of legitimacy or illegitimacy, particularly in light of the diverse actors often involved in armed conflict (see Roy 2004; Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham 2011) and the shifting power dynamics among those actors.

Beyond the intuitive logic that the cumulative effect of being perceived as illegitimate and legitimate by multiple sources might be different than the effect of legitimacy/illegitimacy from a single source, this assertion is also consistent with social psychological research on legitimacy which has shown that the perception of consensus affects perceptions of legitimacy (Zelditch and Walker 2003). In their experimental research on the conditions leading to perceptions of legitimacy, Zelditch and Walker (2003) found that when participants believed that the way a leader justified their decisions was invalid, they doubted the presence of collective consensus within that particular situation. The authors write, “Thus, challenged, they simply looked elsewhere for consensus” (Zelditch and Walker 2003: 227). The authors conclude from their experiments that complete consensus on any given issue is not necessary for legitimacy, and instead there is a minimal threshold. However, what I hope to highlight through this example is the ancillary observation that contested perceptions alter the dynamics of legitimation and have the potential to shift the way actors make sense of a situation. As such, we would expect that that the effects of legitimation dyads might vary based on the networks in which they are embedded (see also Dornbusch and Scott 1975).

## *Rethinking the Challenges of Legitimacy*

The asymmetry and relationality of legitimacy and illegitimacy reframe some of the key challenges to the study of legitimation in armed conflict, highlighting a different way of thinking about legitimation processes that may be more consistent with the distinctive conditions present in political violence. Turning attention to illegitimacy suggests a way of examining how perceptions of rightness and acceptability shape conflict processes that allows us to move beyond the high degree of contextual contingency that has so limited previous theory and research. Similarly, focusing on the network dynamics implied by the relationality of legitimacy allows us to examine the cumulative effects of multiple sources of illegitimacy and legitimacy. However, the implications of legitimation networks extend beyond these cumulative effects. Not all actors involved in armed conflict are necessarily involved in conferring legitimacy or illegitimacy to all other actors. Some become engaged in conflicts based on material or pragmatic concerns (Walter 2004), while others may support one side purely based on opposition to the other. By focusing on the network of actors involved in conflict and examining the relationships of legitimacy and illegitimacy, we also stand to gain deeper insights into how power relations—as reflected in material, economic and social conditions—mediate and are mediated by the effects of illegitimacy and legitimacy.

Turning attention to illegitimacy and networks of legitimation has tremendous potential to advance our understanding of legitimacy in armed conflict. However, while I have largely framed this discussion as a series of assertions, in truth these claims represent empirical questions. In what follows, I present an overview of three empirical studies (included as appendices) that engage these assertions through comparative and historical research on armed conflict.

## **Empirical Studies of Legitimation in Armed Conflict**

### *Empirical Scope*

The theories and concepts informing this work are broad, spanning areas of research ranging from social psychology, organizational theory and social movement studies to international relations and comparative politics. While I hope to convince the reader that the theoretical implications of this research are equally broad, the substantive and empirical focus is more limited. The empirical analyses that comprise the main body of this work focus exclusively on the analysis of intrastate conflicts that have occurred since the end of World War II. The Second World War marked what Wimmer and Min (2006: 871) refer to as the third wave of nation-state diffusion, when the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia were decolonized. Following the war, new international legal institutions and regulations were set in place that gave rise to anti-colonial movements and reshaped global politics (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 87). While only one set of analyses presented below reaches as far back as 1946, the social, political and economic shifts following World War II make 1946 a substantively meaningful lower-limit for the temporal range of conflict studies. The upper-limit is 2013, the year immediately prior to the end of original data collection.

The focus on intrastate conflict is driven both by theoretical and substantive concerns. Substantively, intrastate conflicts represent the overwhelming majority of armed conflicts occurring throughout the world. Since 1946, intrastate conflicts have outpaced interstate conflicts by more than five to one (Fearon and Laitin 2003). Theoretically, intrastate conflicts highlight the complex dynamics of legitimacy in armed conflict to a much higher degree than interstate conflicts. While Wimmer and Min (2006: 896) argue that interstate and intrastate wars are largely the result of similar processes—fought over the institutional structure of a state—the

legitimacy implied by state power (e.g., Weber [1920] 2004) has the potential to narrow the focus of legitimacy contests to issues rather than actors.<sup>4</sup> Focusing on intrastate conflicts provides a richer, more complex set of relationships through which legitimacy or illegitimacy can be conferred and facilitates a more comprehensive examination of the causes and effects of illegitimacy.

Beyond theoretical and substantive issues, the scope of this work is highly consistent with the majority of contemporary research in armed conflict and peace research. This facilitates dialogue with contemporary research on conflict processes. Moreover, because of the prevalence of intrastate conflict after World War II, a focus on intrastate conflict allows this research to engage issues of contemporary importance with timely implications.

*Study I: The Asymmetry of Legitimacy*

The first empirical study (Appendix A) examines the assertion that there is a causal asymmetry between legitimacy and illegitimacy. Combining comparative analysis and historical research, I examine the conditions under which government violence during civil conflict is viewed as legitimate or illegitimate by the civilian population. To address this question, I expanded on data collected by Paul, Clarke and Grill (2010) in their recent study of counterinsurgency strategies, and integrated data from the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset (Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009). The final dataset accounts for 30 cases of civil conflict across six continents, from 1978 to 2008.

I analyzed these data using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA; Ragin 2008). fsQCA uses set-theoretic logic to provide a middle path between statistical analyses that evaluate net effects, and qualitative analyses that focus on individual cases. The approach presumes that logical conjunctions of conditions are causally relevant for producing an outcome,

rather than relying on the perspective that independent variables in additive combination lead to a given outcome (see Grofman and Schneider 2009). For the purposes of this analysis, fsQCA provides two distinct advantages over traditional regression modeling. First, it presumes that multiple distinctive paths can lead to the same outcome. Second, it allows the analyst to connect cases directly to solutions, thereby facilitating further inductive analyses of the results.

From Paul and colleagues' (2010) data, I constructed one index for perceptions that state-sanctioned violence was legitimate and one index for perceptions that state sanctioned violence was illegitimate. I then conducted separate analyses for perceptions of legitimacy versus illegitimacy.

Consistent with existing theory and research, the results of the fsQCA indicated no patterns in the conditions for legitimacy. However, the analysis revealed meaningful patterns across the cases where violence was viewed as illegitimate that are unprecedented in research on legitimacy. By all indicators, the analysis of illegitimacy provided more robust results than the analysis of legitimacy. Further, the analysis revealed three distinct pathways to the popular perceptions that government-sanctioned violence was illegitimate.

Building on these results, I examined the historical details of cases where the use of violence was viewed as illegitimate to identify the historical mechanisms underlying the three pathways to illegitimacy. This historical analysis revealed the following general mechanisms that result in perceptions that state-sanctioned violence is illegitimate: 1) collective repression where specific groups or general regions were targeted produce perceptions that the government's actions lack legitimacy; 2) in cases where established constituencies (e.g., ethnic or religious groups) fought for control of contested territory, all military action by the government was viewed as illegitimate; 3) in cases where self-interested external states engaged militarily on

behalf of a seated government, disparate factions emerged that undermined the legitimacy of the government's actions.

*Study II: Illegitimacy and Success in Revolution*

The second empirical study (Appendix B) turns attention to the specific effects of illegitimacy on violent social movements through an in-depth study of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been active in Turkey since 1978. This case study is motivated by a specific paradox in the literature on violent conflict: legitimacy is widely recognized as necessary for the resilience and long term success of revolutionary groups (e.g., Goldstone 2008; Lomperis 1996; Pham 2011), yet successful revolutionary groups are frequently viewed as illegitimate during the course of the conflict (see Held 2005; Paul, et al. 2010).

The choice to focus specifically on the PKK was motivated by both logistical and theoretical considerations. Logistically, violent intrastate movements are typically covert (see Bakker, et al. 2012) and the degree of information available on these groups varies widely. Because of this, there are no existing data that provide reliable and comparable measures that could be used to assess legitimacy for multiple violent groups. I therefore chose to conduct in-depth, original research on a single case.

From a theoretical perspective, the PKK exemplifies the paradox of legitimacy. The PKK is a radical organization that was founded with the goal of securing an independent Kurdistan in southeast Turkey through the use of violence. While the PKK has used suicide bombs against civilian targets, engaged in punishment and repression of Kurdish civilians and its own members, and violently opposed Kurdish rights efforts operating outside its own purview, as Bacık and Coskun note, the conditions of this conflict "...set the PKK on the path to becoming the sole representative of the Kurds [in Turkey]" (Bacık and Coskun 2011: 252). The

group's resilience and successes combined with repeated losses of legitimacy among various constituencies offers a particularly valuable lens for the study of this paradox.

For this analysis, I collected data on the history of Kurdish conflicts in Turkey, the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state, and the PKK's activities and sources of support from 1978-2013. I also compiled public statements and interviews given by PKK leaders, official PKK publications, and other available documentation in English and Turkish on the discourse employed by the group to rally support and acceptance. By comparing the group's discourse with their actions and activities over the course of more than 30 years, I traced how certain expectations that the group actively cultivated helped to foster their legitimacy among various constituencies. I then examined how behaviors that violated the expectations cultivated with certain actors in their network affected the group's success and resilience over time.

My analysis details how the PKK achieved both resilience and successes as a result of their emergence as the face of a broadly legitimated Kurdish resistance. I show that the group explicitly benefited from the flexibility afforded by a willingness to be viewed as illegitimate when the conditions for legitimacy introduced otherwise unwanted constraints. Through this analysis, I suggest revisions to existing theories by arguing that while legitimacy affords important benefits, it also imposes meaningful constraints. For a revolutionary group, illegitimacy in the eyes of specific constituencies reduces the constraints associated with legitimacy and provides valuable flexibility. By having a broad network of support from different audiences, the PKK became less dependent on a single source of legitimacy, thereby mediating the costs of illegitimacy. I argue that illegitimacy inhibits success to the degree that it compromises a group's base of material support and their broader legitimacy as representatives of the conflict's ideological goals.

### *Study III: Networks of Legitimation and the Multiple Paths to Conflict Recurrence*

The third empirical study (Appendix C) interrogates the dynamics of governmental legitimacy and illegitimacy in the context of armed conflict recurrence. While intrastate conflict represents the overwhelming majority of armed conflicts occurring worldwide, an increasing proportion of armed conflicts are recurrences. In the 1960s only 43% of intrastate conflicts were repeat conflicts in the same country, however by the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the proportion had increased to 90% (World Bank 2011). Existing research has proffered explanations for conflict recurrence ranging from the failure of regimes' legitimacy (Call 2012) to the socio-economic conditions following an initial conflict (Walter 2004). However, this literature is characterized by disparities, with highly contradictory findings across different analyses.

In this work, I situate the contradictory findings of previous research within distinct pathways to conflict recurrence and build on these findings to interrogate the role of legitimacy and illegitimacy in this context. My analysis proceeds in two steps. I begin with a quantitative analysis of conflict recurrence, analyzing data on 216 cases of intrastate conflict from 1946 to 2005. Specifically, building on data from the UCDP-PRIO (Uppsala Conflict Data Project-Peace Research Institute Oslo; Kreutz 2010), I formulate a comprehensive logistic regression model that includes the full range of factors previously observed as affecting conflict recurrence. Using this as a baseline, I then decompose the regression using a procedure developed by Breiger and colleagues (2011, 2014; see also Melamed, et al. 2012, 2013) that treats the projection matrix from the regression model as a network of profile similarity. Running the *k*-means clustering algorithm on the data, the network is partitioned into five clusters. Within-cluster analysis reveals that each cluster corresponds exactly to each of five possible outcomes for the initial



conflict (pre-recurrence): rebel victory, government victory, peace agreement, ceasefire and ongoing low-level conflict. Decomposing the contribution of each cluster to the initial logistic regression coefficients reveals that the association between each variable and the outcome differs by cluster. These findings support the assertion that there are multiple pathways to conflict recurrence and help to explain divergences across previous research.

Following the statistical analyses, I compiled historical data on each case of recurrence for a comparative analysis of the mechanisms of recurrence. This analysis reveals four distinct pathways to recurrence: 1) recurrences following rebel victories are represented by cases where the overthrown government retained a base of popular support that had been socially, economically or politically excluded by the new regime but retained the resources necessary for counter-mobilization; 2) recurrences following government victories are represented by cases that followed low intensity conflicts that had sought total governmental overhaul and were followed by no meaningful reforms, thus retaining the perception of governmental illegitimacy without the deterrent effects typically associated with a determinative government victory; 3) recurrences following a ceasefire were initiated by governments seeking a determinative victory; 4) recurrences following peace agreements were initiated by splinter groups that were dissatisfied by the terms of the peace agreement or its outcome.

Through these historical analyses, I interrogate the dynamics of legitimacy and illegitimacy within each pathway to recurrence. I show that while legitimacy may be a sufficient condition to produce enduring peace, it is not a necessary condition and that government repression and “conditional tolerance” (Pakulski 1986) also result in non-recurrence. On the other hand, I argue that perceived illegitimacy of the ruling government is a necessary but insufficient condition for recurrence. Examining the diverse network of actors engaged in each

conflict through the historical research, I discuss how turning attention to the relational dynamics of illegitimacy and the networks actors engaged in these conflicts allows us to better understand the effects of legitimacy/illegitimacy on conflict recurrence in light of the prevailing social and structural conditions following the initial civil war.

### **Contributions and Future Directions**

While these studies necessarily represent initial steps in interrogating the claims advanced here, they nevertheless support the core assertions of this dissertation and suggest several important directions for continued research. Study 1 provides empirical evidence for the asymmetry between legitimacy and illegitimacy. However, the focus on legitimate violence introduces a key limitation insofar as the legitimacy of violence is routinely contested. The subsequent studies support the assertion that illegitimacy represents a more widely shared phenomenon in the context of violent conflict, but it remains unclear whether this would be the case in contexts where legitimacy is taken for granted. For instance, in the study of organizational legitimacy or even in the context of non-conflict governance, the legitimacy of the actors and their actions are not challenged as a matter of course (e.g., Zuckerman 1999; Zelditch and Walker 2003). In these contexts where active legitimacy contests are not the norm, it seems both possible and probable that legitimacy may have more widely shared causes and effects, whereas illegitimacy varies on a more contextual basis. While I contend that an asymmetry between the two constructs would remain, further empirical research is necessary to disentangle what that asymmetry implies in other areas of study.

The research presented in studies 2 and 3 supports the assertion that network effects alter the dynamics of legitimacy, and by examining historical data they show the importance of studying the cumulative effect of diverse sources of legitimacy as well as the interaction between

material conditions and legitimation. However, in both cases networks are used as metaphors for explaining the theoretical framework rather than as the basis of systematic quantitative analyses. To systematically develop our understanding of networks of legitimation, the inclusion of observed network data is critical. This is by no means a small undertaking. Missing or incomplete data, historical inconsistencies, and shifting relationships during protracted conflicts all meaningfully hinder this endeavor. However, first steps might be achieved by examining cases where conflict resolution has involved peace and reconciliation commissions, international criminal tribunals, or other systematic legal processes such as the conflicts in South Africa, Yugoslavia and Rwanda (see Bakker, et al. 2012; Brehm, Uggan, Gasanbo 2014).

Beyond the asymmetry between legitimacy and illegitimacy and the network dynamics of legitimation, studies 2 and 3 highlight broader theoretical issues associated with the study of legitimacy that warrant further investigation. The conclusion of study 2 highlights the importance of interrogating the relativity of legitimacy. While the PKK was viewed as legitimate by many of its supporters, there is evidence to suggest that many others supported the group (at least initially) because it was the only viable alternative to the state that was viewed as acting illegitimately. Similarly, study 3 highlights the possibility that an actor can simply lack legitimacy while not being perceived as illegitimate. This relative lack of illegitimacy does not necessarily imply legitimacy so much as it provides a basis for choosing one side over the other. As such it is possible that being *more* legitimate than the alternative or *less* illegitimate can have similarly benefits to legitimacy or illegitimacy, yet it is unclear whether this relative status has the same stability and long-term benefits as falling more squarely into one classification or the other. Research on negative coalitions (e.g., Dix 1984) would suggest that being relatively less

illegitimate does not have the same long-term benefits as legitimacy, but further research is necessary to empirically evaluate these dynamics.

The issue of relativity also raises questions about the distinction between an absence of legitimacy versus illegitimacy, and vice versa. It is possible that an actor or action fails to meet the criteria for legitimacy without explicitly violating those criteria and thereby falling into the category of “illegitimate”. While the divergent dynamics of this distinction are not apparent in the research presented here, this distinction between the absence of illegitimacy versus legitimacy or the absence of legitimacy versus illegitimacy warrants further consideration and empirical examination.

Along with its theoretical and substantive contributions, this research has broader methodological implications. While the importance of a network approach is among those methodological implications, studies 1 and 3 go further. In each case, I relied on methods that were able to systematically identify multiple pathways leading to the same outcome. In study three, the decomposition of logistic regression results provided clarity to a substantive literature that is characterized by “tremendous disparity” (Call 2012: 30). In this case, traditional net-effects modeling approaches failed to account for systematic patterns within subsets of the population of cases that resulted from distinct causal mechanisms. In study 1, the fsQCA analyses highlighted conditions under which key predictive factors behaved differently depending on the other factors they were combined with.

These findings indicate that the continued study of legitimacy and illegitimacy requires the integration of both inductive and deductive approaches and highlight the fact that there may be many paths to the same outcome. While deductive analyses remain critical for hypothesis testing and theory refinement, there is much to be gained from further inductive research.

Moreover, this research shows that while distinct patterns are identifiable across cases and countries, there is not necessarily one single pattern across all cases and countries and the identification of these social processes requires methods that are sensitive to equifinality.

The arguments advanced in this dissertation are among many in a long tradition of research on legitimacy that have sought to disentangle this construct. This work retrains focus on ideas that have largely been acknowledged elsewhere but have been overlooked. Drawing attention to these features of legitimacy, illegitimacy, and the processes of legitimation opens the door to a vast array of new approaches and ways of analyzing legitimacy, and the empirical analyses support the value of this endeavor. Further conclusions and suggestions for continued research are outlined in the articles that make up Appendices A, B and C, each building on the specific analyses presented.

### **Endnotes**

1. These themes map closely to Suchman's (1995) moral, pragmatic and cognitive forms of legitimacy, and represent well the range of approaches that have dominated sociological research on this topic.
2. Bakker and colleagues (2012; Raab and Milward 2003) define dark networks as networks of actors that operate both covertly and illegally.
3. See Appendix A for a more detailed discussion of McWilliams's (2011[1971]) argument.
4. While the legitimacy of a state may be contested, the recognition of a state as a sovereign unit does imply de facto legitimacy from the perspective of international relations and international law.

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## APPENDIX A

### **The Asymmetry of Legitimacy: Analyzing the Legitimation of Violence in 30 Cases of Insurgent Revolution**

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#### **Abstract**

This article demonstrates that there is a causal asymmetry between legitimate and illegitimate violence in civil conflict, and advocates turning analytic attention to illegitimacy. Fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis is used to assess patterns in the conditions for civilians' perceptions that state-sanctioned violence was legitimate versus illegitimate in 30 cases of insurgent revolution that occurred between 1978-2008. Findings show no substantive patterns in the conditions for legitimacy, but reveal three causal pathways to illegitimacy that transcend regional and national boundaries. Comparative historical analysis of these pathways details general causal mechanisms that result in perceptions that state-sanctioned violence is illegitimate. This research shows that while the conditions for legitimacy vary by case, the conditions for illegitimacy transcend regional contexts, representing a more global phenomenon.

The legitimacy of violence has been widely observed as shaping the course and outcome of civil conflict (see Heathershaw 2007; Galtung 1975). However, the use of legitimacy as an analytic construct applied in the systematic study of conflict is controversial, and repeated calls have been made to abandon the use of legitimacy in the analysis of political processes generally (see Gilley 2009: xii). These critiques focus on the intangibility of legitimacy and the wide variations from one case to the next in how evaluations of legitimacy are made (see Przeworski 1986; Easton 1975; O’Kane 1993). Broadly, legitimacy can be defined as the perception or assumption that something is right, proper, or appropriate within the bounds of a system of norms, values or beliefs (Suchman 1995). However, there are no agreed upon absolute standards for legitimacy, and the norms, values and beliefs on which evaluations of legitimacy are based vary widely from one context to the next (see Bakker, Raab and Milward 2012; Johnson, Dowd and Ridgeway 2006). What’s more, legitimacy is often relative, and the effects of legitimacy are shaped by the availability of alternatives to that which is being evaluated (Kurzman 2004: 136; Linz 1989: 18). As such, critics generally assert that the same outcomes can be more systematically studied by examining more concrete conditions.

Nevertheless, legitimacy remains widely invoked in the study of conflict and stands at the center of debates over international law regarding the appropriate use of violence by states (Gardam 1993). In discussing why legitimacy remains important in spite of critiques, Gilley writes, “Legitimacy can be a tricky concept to measure and apply, but this is true of many important concepts in politics. Eliminating it from our analysis in order to focus on more easily measurable factors... is putting methodological precision ahead of substantive findings.” (Gilley 2009: xiii).

This article engages and advances these debates by turning attention to illegitimacy. I develop and empirically substantiate the argument that the conditions that lead to perceptions that violence is illegitimate are not the symmetrical opposite of the conditions for legitimacy, and that the conditions for illegitimacy represent a more global phenomenon that transcends the social and cultural boundaries of legitimacy. Using fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) (Ragin 2008) I examine how various conditions combine to shape civilians' perceptions of state-sanctioned violence across 30 cases of insurgent revolution from 1978-2008. The analyses show that the causal conditions leading to perceptions of legitimacy are unique to almost every case where violence was viewed as legitimate. However, the analysis of illegitimacy reveals broad patterns that span regional and national boundaries. Three distinct pathways to illegitimacy highlight general mechanisms that result in perceptions that state-sanctioned violence is illegitimate. These mechanisms include the indiscriminate use of violence against a general population, the use of violence by culturally inappropriate outsiders, and indeterminate responsibility for violence resulting from multiple parties engaging in conflict.

I begin with a theoretical justification for treating the conditions of legitimacy and illegitimacy as asymmetric. I then introduce the definition of legitimate violence used in this research and provide an overview of conditions expected to shape perceptions of state-sanctioned violence. After detailing the data and methods, I present the fsQCA results and integrate the comparative historical analyses of the cases to further develop and interpret those results. I conclude by discussing the broader implications of the asymmetry between legitimacy and illegitimacy.

## **Background**

### *Asymmetry and Illegitimacy*

Questions surrounding when violence by a state is legitimate have a long intellectual history, and the conditions for legitimate violence have been widely debated in both academic research and international law (see Holmes 1989; Elshtain 1985; Waltz 2000; Walzer 2006). Throughout these efforts to define legitimate violence, concepts of illegitimacy are naturally used as a critical point of reference. This follows the logic that to define something as right or appropriate, we must have a corresponding reference for that which is wrong or inappropriate.

While concepts of illegitimacy are central to debates over the conditions for legitimacy, scholarship in this area widely treats illegitimacy as ancillary. Illegitimacy is defined as the opposite or absence of legitimacy (Beetham 1991: 16). As such, research on legitimacy generally treats the conditions for illegitimacy as merely the symmetrical opposite of the conditions for legitimacy (McWilliams 2011[1971]). The conditions for illegitimacy are widely taken for granted, and overlooked in empirical analyses.

However, in his essay, *On Political Illegitimacy*, McWilliams (2011[1971]) asserts that the conditions for illegitimacy may not simply be the opposite of the conditions of legitimacy. He writes, “Illegitimacy becomes central in times of uncertainty because men can agree about things they believe to be wrong even when they cannot agree or are unsure about what is right.” (McWilliams 2011 [1971]: 243). This argument is rooted in the assertion that legitimacy is tied to the approval and consent of individual actors. For something to be legitimate it must reflect those individuals who are engaged in the evaluation. On the other hand, illegitimacy is experienced and assessed at a collective level (McWilliams 2011[1971]: 246). McWilliams argues that while legitimacy is driven by the perception that actors or their actions represent the evaluators’ system of beliefs, illegitimacy is driven by a lack of representation, bad faith, and



arbitrariness, all of which can be determined at a collective level and are therefore more widely viewed as fact rather than opinion.

While the assertion that symmetrically defined constructs can have asymmetric causes may be unintuitive, it is not uncommon. This is demonstrated by a diverse body of comparative social science research. For example, success and failure are defined in opposition, but the conditions for success have been shown to be distinct and not simply the opposite of the conditions for failure (Wickham-Crowley 1993). Similarly, while low GRE scores are sufficient for rejection from graduate school, high GRE scores do not guarantee admission (see Vaisey 2009).

An asymmetry between the conditions for illegitimacy versus legitimacy has meaningful implications for the study of violence and conflict, yet it has gone untested empirically and is effectively overlooked theoretically. Methodologically, this asymmetry suggests a way of approaching the study of legitimation (as represented by the dual concepts of legitimacy and illegitimacy) that turns attention to the element that is more widely shared and rooted in evaluations that occur at a collective level. Theoretically, it expands the way we treat evaluations of rightness and acceptability, providing a more nuanced approach that accounts for assumptions that are frequently overlooked but nevertheless fundamental to the evaluation process. The following section outlines the specific definitions of legitimate and illegitimate violence that are operationalized in the analyses to follow, and provides an overview of conditions expected to affect public perceptions of state-sanctioned violence.

### *The Legitimacy of Violence*

In this work I build on the definition of legitimacy introduced above, and define the legitimacy of state-sanctioned violence as *the perception among the civilian population in the*

*area of conflict that violence sanctioned by the state is right or appropriate, relative to known alternatives.* Illegitimate violence is defined as the opposite of legitimate violence. This definition accounts for three key factors that are central in the literature on the legitimacy of state violence. First, it accounts for the source of legitimacy, which plays an important role in understanding its effects. Here I focus on legitimation by the civilian population in the area of conflict. This choice is based on recent research on civil conflict that identifies civilian constituencies as the most critical source of legitimacy affecting the course and outcome of conflict (Paul, et al. 2010a; Roy 2004).

Second, this definition emphasizes the relative nature of legitimacy. As Kurzman (2004: 136) notes, legitimacy is evaluated on a relative scale, not as an absolute value. Perceptions that violence is legitimate or illegitimate are shaped both by the degree to which the violence can be justified (for example, by the degree to which it ultimately promotes security and stability), and by the available alternatives (for example, the exercise of violence by non-state militants).

Finally, the relativity captured by this definition also reflects the concept of proportionality, which is integral in determining the legitimacy versus illegitimacy of violence in international law and philosophical scholarship on the ethics of war (see Holmes 1989). Proportionality refers to the degree of violence necessary to achieve a given outcome, with the understanding that some degree of violence may be necessary, but violence that extends beyond the level necessary for achieving specific goals (e.g., the maintenance of security) would not be legitimate (Gardam 1993). The articulation of these three factors within this broad definition of legitimacy/illegitimacy helps to more specifically operationalize legitimate and illegitimate violence.

While divergent perspectives on legitimacy in war highlight distinct conditions for the legitimate use of force, a review of the literature on state violence reveals several points of consensus which will guide the analyses to follow. First among these is the legitimacy of the government. In line with Weber's (2004 [1920]) essay, *Politics as a Vocation*, scholarship in the just war and realist traditions—two canonical schools of thought on the ethics of war and violence—take the legitimacy of the government as a necessary condition for the legitimacy of government sanctioned violence (see Thomas 2011). On its surface, it may appear tautological to presume that the legitimacy of the government is a condition for the legitimacy of violence. However, the constitutive elements that comprise each construct are distinct. In a comprehensive review of the literature on political legitimacy, Gilley (2009) articulates key factors in governmental legitimacy. Among these are the government's capacity to provide material resources, the way in which the government came to power, and citizens' sense that they are represented by the government (Gilley 2009: 31, 44). These factors guide the construction of an index for governmental legitimacy that is distinct from the outcome, legitimate violence.

While governmental legitimacy remains important in the study of revolution and civil conflict (see Goodwin 2006), the causal relationship between governmental legitimacy and legitimate violence is less consistent in the context of intra-state wars where the legitimacy of the government is challenged by a subset of the population. A government may be legitimate based on multiple measures, but systematic exclusion or oppression of a subgroup will often lead to conflict and can undermine the legitimacy of the government's actions (Sammons 2003). This is particularly relevant in ethnic conflicts, where democratically elected governments may still exclude minority groups. As such, the degree of political representation and the share of the population that is systematically excluded from politics within the existing government have

been shown to shape the legitimacy of the government and their actions (see Wimmer, et al. 2009).

Beyond the attributes of the state, a range of other conditions have been identified as shaping the legitimacy of state-sanctioned violence. States may work to bolster the legitimacy of their actions by fostering positive relations with the civilian population (Paul, et al. 2010a). Further, the interests and motives of specific actors fighting on behalf of the state may affect the legitimacy of state-sanctioned violence. United States counterinsurgency guidelines highlight the idea that mobilizing local, non-professional forces increases the legitimacy of state-sanctioned actions; however, in states with weak governments this can lead to factionalization that undermines the original justification for violence (see Bhatia 2011).

External intervention has also been found to have a significant effect on the legitimacy of a state's actions. Franck and Rodley (1973) point out that intervention by external militaries is typically self-interested, often increasing the intensity of violence and failing to represent the interests of those on whose behalf they intervene. Gizelis and Kosek (2005) also show that external military interventions are often disconnected from local actors, reducing local approval and investment in the conflict. As such, local support for the external actors' goals, and positive relations between the actors engaged in violence and the local population are viewed as critical to the legitimacy of violence.

## **Data and Methods**

### *Data*

To empirically develop the assertion that the conditions for illegitimate violence are asymmetric to the conditions for legitimate violence and represent a more global phenomenon, I expand on an existing dataset of 30 cases of insurgent revolutions (Table 1) that occurred

Table 1: Cases included in data\*

<i>Country</i>	<i>Dates</i>
Nicaragua (Anti-Somoza)	1978–1979
Afghanistan (Anti-Soviet)	1978–1992
Kampuchea	1978-1992
El Salvador	1979-1992
Somalia	1980–1991
Peru	1980–1992
Nicaragua (Contras)	1981-1990
Senegal	1982-2002
Turkey (Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK))	1984-1999
Sudan	1984-2004
Uganda	1986-2000
Papua, New Guinea	1988-1998
Liberia	1989-1997
Rwanda	1990-1994
Moldova	1990-1992
Sierra Leone	1991-2002
Algeria	1992-2004
Croatia	1992-1997
Afghanistan (Post-Soviet)	1992-1995
Tajikistan	1992-1997
Georgia/Abkhazia	1992-1994
Nagorno-Karabakh	1992-1994
Bosnia	1992-1995
Burundi	1993-2003
Chechnya	1994-1996
Afghanistan (Taliban)	1996-2001
Zaire (Anti-Mobutu)	1996-1997
Kosovo	1996-1999
Nepal	1997-2006
Democratic Republic of the Congo (Anti-Kabila)	1998-2003

\*Information drawn from Paul et al. (2010a: 9-10)

between 1978 and 2008 (Paul, et al. 2010a). The original data were constructed through an iterative, inductive process of in-depth qualitative analyses that relied on available English-language resources. The researchers began with an extensive list of variables that they sought to measure across all cases. Because the duration of each conflict was different, they divided each

case into multiple phases, which were delineated based on major changes in the conditions of the conflicts. Data were collected for each phase of each conflict. The number of phases in each conflict ranged from 2 to 5 with phases lasting between 1 and twelve years. One phase in each conflict was designated as “decisive” based on substantive case analysis. To maximize substantive comparability and more accurately capture the causal relationship between the conditions of the conflict and their effect on perceptions of violence, data drawn from Paul and colleagues’ dataset for this analysis was taken from the decisive phase of each conflict. This phase afforded the most relevant insights for the subsequent historical analyses, which account for the entirety of each conflict.

During data collection, the researchers adjusted the specification of each variable based on the degree to which reliable data was available for all cases. For example, one variable was originally specified as “Population angered/alienated by [counterinsurgent] force collateral damage”. However, the researchers found little variance in whether civilians were angered or alienated by collateral damage, and determined that it was both possible and more important to measure how each government’s collateral damage was perceived in comparison to the collateral damage caused by the insurgency. As such, the variable was re-specified as “[Counterinsurgent] force collateral damage not perceived by population in area of conflict as worse than insurgents”. In every case where a variable was re-specified during the coding process, all previously scored data was revisited and adjusted to reflect the new specification.<sup>1</sup> This resulted in a dataset of 76 qualitatively specified dichotomous variables.

Descriptive statistics for all variables included in the fsQCA analyses are shown in Table 2. Six of the original dichotomous variables constructed by Paul and colleagues (2010a) are included, along with newly constructed fuzzy sets measuring the legitimacy of the government,

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Variable Type</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Legitimate force	Fuzzy set	0.367	0.00	1.00
Government legitimacy	Fuzzy set	0.220	0.00	1.00
Share of the excluded population relative to the ethnopolitically relevant population (in %)	Fuzzy set	0.284	0.00	0.86
Powerless population (in %)	Fuzzy set	0.266	0.04	0.98
Counterinsurgency sought to engage and establish positive relations with population in area of conflict	Dichotomous	0.133	0.00	1.00
Counterinsurgency avoided culturally offensive behaviors and messages	Dichotomous	0.467	0.00	1.00
Counterinsurgency employed local militias or irregular forces or engaged in/enabled community policing in areas it controlled or claimed to control	Dichotomous	0.833	0.00	1.00
Majority of population in area of conflict supported/favored the counterinsurgency	Dichotomous	0.300	0.00	1.00
External support to counterinsurgent forces from strong state/military	Dichotomous	0.500	0.00	1.00
External support to insurgents from strong state/military	Dichotomous	0.567	0.00	1.00

the percentage of ethnic minorities excluded from power, and the percentage of each population that was politically powerless. The latter two variables are drawn from the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset (Wimmer, et al. 2009). For each of these variables, a single value is coded for the relevant periods of each conflict. For 28 of the 30 cases, there is no change in the value of either measure during the phase of the conflict being analyzed. For the two cases where a change in either score occurred—the post-Soviet conflict in Afghanistan, and the conflict in Burundi—I examined these changes in relation to the historical details of each case and determined that averaging the scores across each period of interest provides the most meaningful representation of the conflict conditions. In each of these cases, there is a single change in each

Table 3: Dichotomous Factors used to construct fuzzy set of *governmental legitimacy*

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- Government corruption reduced/good governance increased since onset of conflict
  - [Counterinsurgency] provided or ensured provision of basic services in areas it controlled or claimed to control
  - Government leaders selected in a manner considered just and fair by majority of population in area of conflict
  - Majority of citizens in area of conflict viewed government as legitimate
  - [Counterinsurgency] maintained credibility with populations in area of conflict (includes expectation management)
- 

of the variables drawn from the EPR dataset that occurs at the end of the respective conflict phases and corresponds with transitions of power within national political institutions.<sup>2</sup>

Averaging across years privileges the scores that represent the majority of each time period without omitting the changes that occur at the end of each conflict phase.

To measure the legitimacy of the government as a condition for the legitimacy/illegitimacy of the government's use of violence, I created an index by combining five dichotomous factors drawn from Paul et al.'s dataset that reflect the facets of governmental legitimacy outlined above (see Table 3; Paul, et al. 2010a: 42). Re-coding the index as a fuzzy set (scored 0-1), the dichotomous factors were summed and divided by the total number of factors for each case. Because the index is cumulative and there is no theoretical basis for assuming any one of these factors is uniformly more important than another, the threshold for membership (whether a case was more in the set of "legitimate" than out) was set at 0.5, with 1 indicating full membership and 0 being full non-membership. Figure 1 shows the frequency of scores for the fuzzy set of legitimate force.

#### *Operationalization of legitimate and illegitimate force*

Construction of the fuzzy set for legitimate violence followed the same procedure outlined for the construction of a fuzzy set for the legitimacy of the government. As indicated by

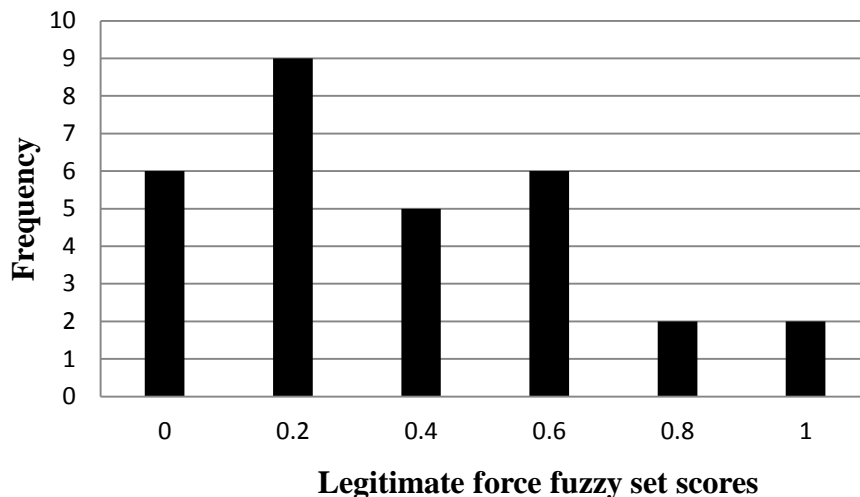


Table 4: Dichotomous Factors used to construct fuzzy set of *legitimate force*

- In area of conflict, counterinsurgency force not perceived as worse than insurgents.
- Perception of security created or maintained among population in areas [counterinsurgent] force claimed to control.
- [Counterinsurgency was] not viewed as an occupying force in area of conflict.
- [Counterinsurgency] avoided excessive collateral damage, disproportionate use of force, or other illegitimate applications of force.
- [Counterinsurgent] collateral damage not perceived by population in area of conflict as worse than insurgents.

the definition of legitimate/illegitimate force outlined above, it was necessary to account for both the relativity of legitimacy and the proportionality of the violence from the perspective of the civilian population. To do this, I adopted a schema for legitimate force developed by Paul and colleagues (2010a: 42-43), constructing an index from dichotomous variables measuring factors that reflect the theoretical conditions outlined above. The variables used to construct the index are listed in Table 4. For every case, the scores on all variables in the index were summed and divided by the number of indicators included in the index to construct the fuzzy set. The threshold for membership was again set at 0.5, with 0 indicating full non-membership, and 1 indicating full membership. Reflecting the definitional symmetry between legitimacy and illegitimacy, illegitimacy was coded as the inverse of legitimacy.

Figure 1: Frequency of scores for the fuzzy set of legitimate force



## *Methods*

fsQCA is a set-theoretic approach to analysis that takes a middle path between standard regression analyses that evaluate correlation or net effects, and qualitative analyses that focus on individual cases. The approach presumes that logical conjunctions of conditions are causally relevant for producing an outcome, rather than assuming that independent variables in additive combination lead to a given outcome (Grofman and Schneider 2009).

Each analysis identifies combinations of conditions that, a) are associated with the outcome, and b) balance coverage and consistency. Coverage (measured on a 0 to 1 scale) is defined as the proportion of the sum of membership scores in the outcome for cases represented by a given conjunction of conditions. Coverage is further separated into raw and unique coverage. Raw coverage is the coverage score for all cases accounted for by a given conjunction of conditions, while unique coverage indicates the degree to which a given conjunction of conditions accounts for cases that are otherwise unaccounted for by other conjunctions of conditions. Consistency (also scored from 0 to 1) is the proportion of cases within a conjunction that manifest the outcome. The typical benchmark for meaningful consistency is 0.80, and existing scholarship has identified scores of 0.9 or greater as being highly consistent (see Bail 2008).

In addition to the results of each analysis presented in the text, Appendix A (online) includes truth tables used for both of the fsQCA analyses presented below. These tables show the observed configurations of the predictive factors, and list the number of cases that have 0.5 membership or greater in each configuration. It also shows the degree to which membership in each configuration overlaps with membership in the outcome, which is represented by the consistency scores in the table. fsQCA requires the specification of criteria for excluding and

coding configurations so as to eliminate logically irrelevant conjunctions (Grant, Morales and Sallaz 2009). For both analyses, only those configurations represented by at least one case were included, and based on an examination of gaps in the upper range of consistency (see Ragin 2008), 0.80 was set as the threshold for coding configurations as theoretically consistent fuzzy subsets of the outcome.

By evaluating set relations among conditions that produce a given outcome, fsQCA is able to account for key phenomena that are otherwise lost in standard quantitative analysis: equifinality and multifinality. Equifinality is the idea that different combinations of variables might lead to the same outcome. Multifinality, on the other hand, is the idea that the effect of a condition might change based on the other conditions it is combined with (Grofman and Schneider 2009).

As detailed below, the fsQCA results broadly support the key argument of asymmetry. However, this method provides no quantitative basis for assessing causality, relying instead on case-knowledge and theory to elucidate the causal link between specific conditions and the outcomes of interest. To assess the mechanisms that shaped perceptions of state-sanctioned violence within the causal pathways identified using fsQCA, I conducted historical comparisons of the cases representing the fsQCA solutions. Because of the large number of cases included in this analysis, I adopted the approach of using secondary sources to identify initial comparative patterns, then using primary sources to expand and validate these initial patterns where there were inconsistencies or gaps in the secondary literature (George and Bennett 2005: 91; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003: 99). For initial information on the motivation of each conflict, the broad political context in which each conflict occurred, the degree of external support to either side in the conflict, sources of external support, and information on each government's actions

and tactics during the conflict, I relied on the case studies conducted by Paul and colleagues (2010b), and multiple sources of comparative data on civil conflicts, including data collected by Wimmer and Min (2006), Wimmer, Cederman and Min (2009), and Gleditsch et al. (2002). These sources provided a basis for determining initial substantive patterns within the fsQCA solutions. Based on these initial patterns, I reviewed existing secondary historical and legal scholarship on the cases to identify specific mechanisms that shaped popular perceptions of the state-sanctioned violence. When inconsistencies emerged within the secondary literature, I relied on primary sources including government reports, reports by non-governmental organizations active in the areas of conflict, and international court records.

## **Results**

### *Conditions for Legitimacy*

Figure 2 presents the results of comparative analysis for legitimate violence, and illustrates the five causal pathways identified using fsQCA. Cells with black text on a white background indicate conditions that are present for all cases represented by a causal pathway, and cells with white text on a black background indicate conditions that are absent for all cases represented by the causal pathway. Consistent with existing research on legitimacy (e.g., Bakker, et al. 2012; Roy 2004), these pathways reflect a high degree intra-case specificity in the conditions for legitimacy.

In this figure we see that the solutions for Uganda, Algeria, Peru and Sierra Leone share three conditions (use of non-professional military, popular support for the government and a low share of politically powerless population). However, these pathways diverge. In the case of Uganda, the insurgents received external support, whereas in Algeria, Peru and Sierra Leone the

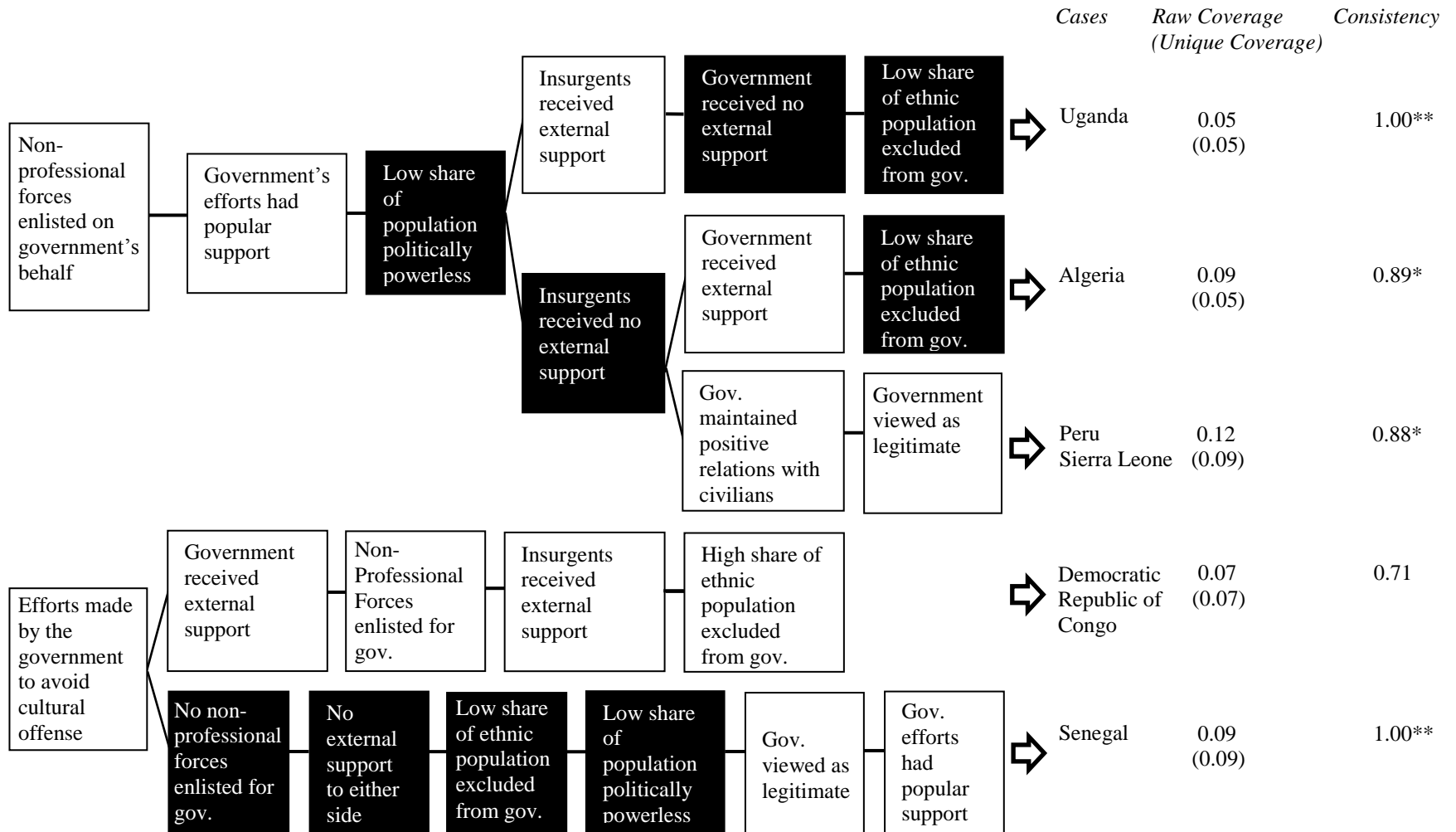
opposite is true. Further, in Uganda the government did not receive external support from a strong military, whereas in Algeria the government did receive such support.

These divergences represent meaningful variation in the effects of widely held conditions for legitimacy. Research on external state intervention during civil conflict highlights the potentially negative effects of even peaceful intervention efforts. Wimmer (2013) notes that, “Outsiders who provide public goods—schools, hospitals, and the like—undermine the legitimacy of the domestic government, rather than foster it.” Yet, in spite of the fact that the government of Algeria received extensive external support from France, the violence used by the government was viewed as more legitimate than the violence enacted by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) that initiated the conflict and had no external support. In this case, the critical distinction is in the type of intervention. France supplied military aid to the government but did not deploy troops, allowing the government to retain control while expanding their capabilities (Paul et al. 2010b).

Each of the causal pathways identified through this analysis meets or exceeds the 0.80 threshold for meaningful consistency, indicating that the conditions used in the analysis are in fact reflective of broader causes for legitimacy. However, there is a high degree of multifinality and low coverage scores, which is consistent with the assumption that the conditions for legitimacy vary from case to case. This is further reflected in the high overall consistency but low overall coverage, which shows that only 40% of the cases exhibiting some degree of the outcome (legitimate violence) are represented by these solutions.

With the exception of Peru and Sierra Leone, which share common conditions, only one case has 0.5 membership or greater in each of the causal pathways. According to Epstein, Duerr, Kenworthy and Ragin (2008), this indicates that there is no substantively meaningful

Figure 2: fsQCA analysis of legitimate violence



Overall Consistency: 0.87\*

Overall Coverage: 0.40

\* Consistent (0.80 benchmark)

\*\* Highly consistent (0.90 benchmark)

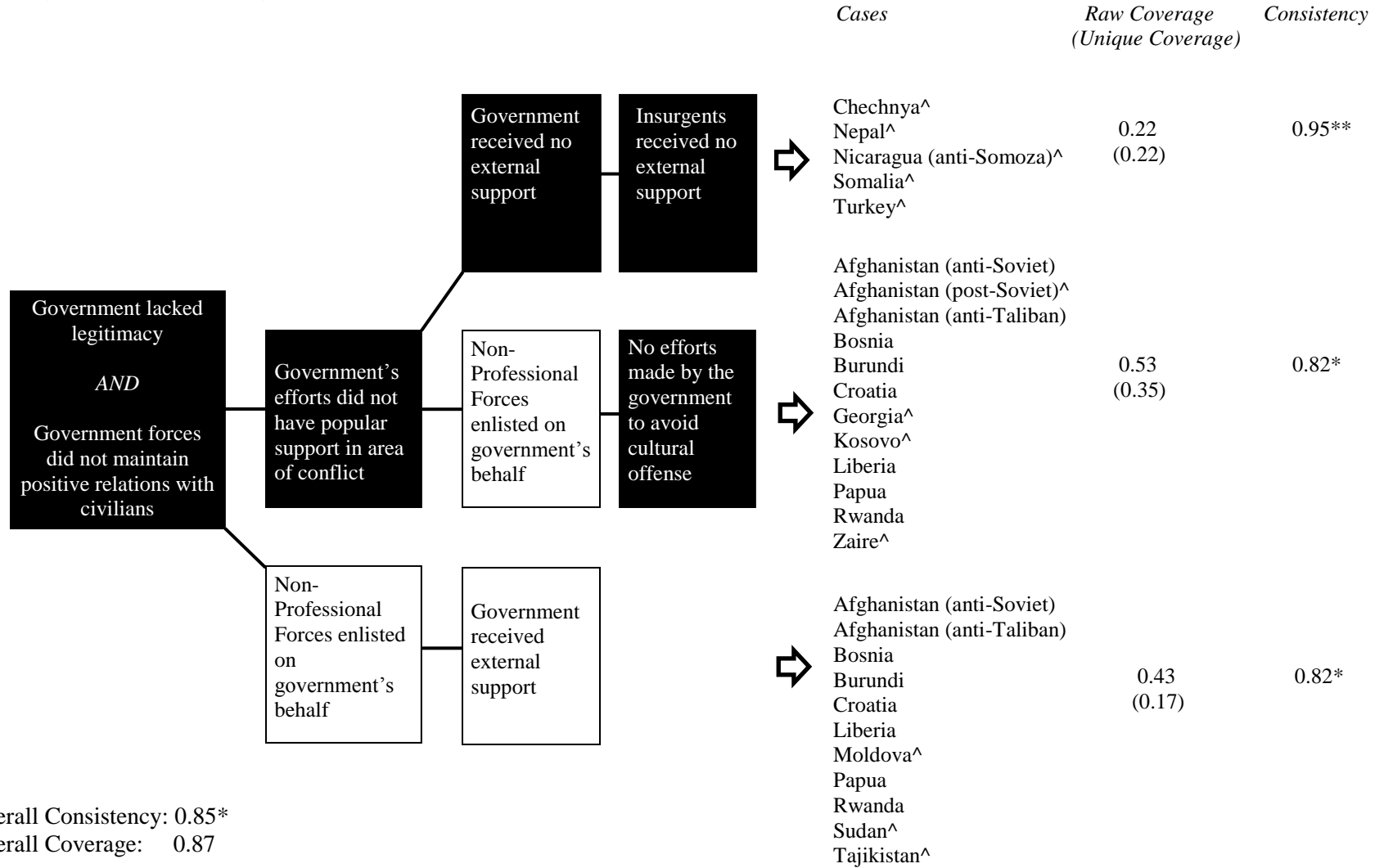
comparative pattern. Because no substantively meaningful patterns were revealed by this analysis, and because these results are consistent with existing research on legitimacy, further in-depth historical analyses within each solution are not included here.

The fsQCA does identify some conditions that appear to consistently contribute to perceptions of legitimacy. For example, with the exception of Senegal, all other cases include the engagement of non-professional forces on the government's behalf. This is consistent with contemporary thinking on counterinsurgency which highlights the use of local forces to bolster the legitimacy of the counterinsurgency. Similarly, with the exception of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, all other cases shared popular support for the government's efforts as a condition for legitimacy. The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo was fueled by ethnic tensions (Wimmer, et al. 2009) and actively engaged by strong external states (Gleditsch, et al. 2002). While much of the violence descended into regional conflicts, the counterinsurgency and the collateral damage they inflicted were not perceived as worse than the insurgents, and under the leadership of Joseph Kabila the government worked to promote a power sharing agreement that resulted in stability (Paul, et al. 2010b). Because of the ethnic divides and factionalization, there was not a majority of support for the government's efforts, but their use of violence was ultimately proportional to that of their opposition, and their leader was able to broker peace. As these results show, while individual conditions contributed to similar results across cases, no conditions contributed to similar results across all cases, and each pathway is distinct in both the configuration of conditions and the cases that it represents.

#### *Conditions for Illegitimacy*

Figure 3 shows the results of the analysis for illegitimate violence.<sup>3</sup> It is immediately clear that this analysis presents fewer and simpler solutions. In addition to highly simplified

Figure 3: fsQCA analysis of illegitimate violence



Overall Consistency: 0.85\*  
Overall Coverage: 0.87

\* Consistent (0.80 benchmark)

\*\* Highly consistent (0.90 benchmark)

<sup>^</sup> Indicates cases that are unique to a given solution



causal pathways to illegitimacy, two conditions—a lack of government legitimacy and the absence of efforts to maintain positive relations with the civilian population in the area of conflict—were present across all cases. Every pathway exceeds the 0.80 benchmark for meaningful consistency, and each pathway accounts for a minimum of 5 cases, providing a strong basis for determining substantively meaningful comparative patterns (Epstein, et al. 2008).

The overall coverage for this analysis is 87% with a consistency of 85%. Comparing these coverage and consistency scores with those of the analysis for legitimacy shows that the coverage for illegitimacy is more than twice that of legitimacy, from 40% (legitimacy) to 87% (illegitimacy). Further, the consistency is similar, with 87% in the analysis of legitimacy and 85% in the analysis of illegitimacy. This shows that the analysis of illegitimacy provides a better theoretical fit across cases than the analysis of legitimacy.

These overall coverage and consistency scores generally support the assertion that the conditions for illegitimacy transcend the contextual variation that defines legitimacy, thereby representing a more global phenomenon. Analysis of the substantive details of the cases represented by each solution reveals general causal mechanisms represented by each solution identified using fsQCA.

#### *Solution 1: Illegitimacy of Generalized Violence*

The first solution accounts for conflicts in Chechnya, Nepal, Nicaragua (anti-Somoza), Somalia and Turkey, all of which lacked popular support for the government in the area of conflict, and neither the government nor the insurgents received external support. A review of the historical literature on the five conflicts represented by this pathway reveals that each was driven by contestation of domestic policies and political structures. The conflicts in Somalia,

Chechnya, Nepal, and Nicaragua were all initiated in an effort to oust regimes that were viewed as politically corrupt or non-representative. Consistent with historical patterns in autocratic responses to violent insurgencies (Davenport 2007), in each of these cases the governments responded to the insurgencies with generalized violence and repression, seeking to maintain dominance rather than foster support (see Paul, et al. 2010b). This unilateral use of force by each government against a general population directly resulted in perceptions that the use of violence was illegitimate.

The conflict between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is distinct in this category. It is typically viewed as an ethnic conflict, it was initiated as a secessionist civil war rather than an effort to overthrow the government, and for all but two years of the PKK's activity, Turkey had an elected government. However, this case nevertheless provides a valuable illustration of the broader mechanisms identified in this solution.

The PKK began as a radical socialist organization founded in 1978 with the goal securing an independent Kurdistan through the use of violent tactics against the Turkish State (Zehni 2008). The group's armed activity from the late 1970s to the early 1980s consisted of attacking other Kurdish groups and organizations in an effort to dominate and centralize efforts for a separate Kurdish state (Marcus 2007: 33).

In 1984 the PKK began to focus the majority of their attacks on military units and government offices, using guerilla tactics against state entities (Mango 2005: 36). In response to these attacks, in 1985 the Turkish government began arming villagers in the southern region, forming units of village guards (Marcus 2007: 98). However, these village guards became targets for the PKK, and in 1986 the PKK began requiring villagers in the Kurdistan region of Turkey to either join the group or face retribution (Human Rights Watch 2005).

While the PKK's initial tactics led to widespread fear and frequent condemnation by Kurdish leaders, Turkey's military response to the PKK dampened the resonance of opposition to the PKK within the Kurdish community as the state used broad anti-terror laws to allow acts of repression against alleged allies of the PKK (Marcus 2007: 179). Most notably, the Turkish military engaged in the forced relocation of Kurdish villagers, and the destruction of their villages in southeast Turkey. According to a 2013 report by the Human Rights Research Commission of the Turkish Parliament, from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, the Turkish government displaced an estimated 386,360 villagers (see İnsan Haklarını İnceleme Komisyonu 2013).<sup>4</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, this displacement resulted in the elimination of more than 3,000 villages in the Kurdish region of Turkey: "Evacuations were unlawful and violent. Security forces would surround a village using helicopters, armored vehicles, troops and village guards, and burn stored produce, agricultural equipment, crops, orchards, forests, and livestock" (Human Rights Watch 2005).

The use of collective repression and regional violence by the Turkish government is congruent with state responses in each of the other cases. This approach is highly consistent with tactics associated with autocratic and other non-representative regimes, and empirically inconstant with the tactics of democratic states (Davenport 2007), making the Turkish government's response anomalous among other conflicts engaged in democratic states, but consistent with the other cases in this solution. In each case represented by this solution, the governments responded with generalized violence in broad regions of the country in an effort to crush their opposition and the opposition's base of support rather than specifically targeting militants and working to foster stability. These actions resulted in perceptions among the civilian population in the area of conflict that the government's use of violence was illegitimate as it

failed to create security, was worse than that employed by their opponents, and resulted in excessive collateral damage.

### *Solution 2: Illegitimacy of Outsider Violence*

The second solution in the fsQCA analysis of illegitimacy accounts for a total of 12 cases. In each case, the government lacked popular support in the area of conflict, enlisted non-professional forces, and made no efforts to avoid cultural offense. Further, all of these cases were rooted in contested territorial rights, and most were driven by ethnic or religious tensions (see Paul, et al. 2010b; Wimmer, et al. 2009). Conflicts associated with the fall of the former Yugoslavia (including those in Kosovo, Croatia, and Bosnia), and conflicts associated with the fall of the Soviet Union (including those in Georgia/Abkhazian and Afghanistan in 1979) are all characterized by efforts to establish national boundaries in areas occupied by competing ethnic and religious groups which had been under the control of communist federations. The conflict in Papua, New Guinea was neither distinctly an ethnic conflict nor formerly under communist rule (Wimmer, et al. 2009). However, it is consistent with the other cases in that it took place on the island of Bougainville which sought to establish independence from New Guinea. Much of the division between revolutionaries and counterinsurgents in Papua were drawn along ethnic and clan lines as the Bougainville Revolutionary Army sought to establish local economic and political rights (Paul, et al. 2010b). Based on the distinguishing characteristic that no state powers made efforts to avoid cultural offense, and the fact that in nine of the 12 cases the insurgents sought to establish what Wimmer (2013) refers to as the “like-over-like” principle—which represents the idea that ethnic likes should rule over other ethnic likes—there is little evidence to suggest that any force by the government to retain power within each territory would have been viewed as legitimate by civilians in the area of conflict.

This effective absence of any conditions for the legitimate use of force is illustrated by the conflict in Kosovo. While the atrocities perpetrated by Yugoslav forces have widely been defined as illegitimate and constitute acts of genocide, ethnic tensions that motivated this conflict precluded state force being perceived as legitimate by civilians in the area of conflict. This conflict was rooted in the 1989 revocation of Kosovo's regional autonomy within Serbia, which had been in place since 1947 and had been reaffirmed by the Yugoslav Constitution of 1974 (Wedgwood 1999). Kosovo's autonomy was revoked based on the assertion that the Serbian minority within the Kosovo region was at risk. The revocation of autonomy and assertion of Serbian rights presented significant risks to the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, and in 1993 efforts to establish an independent Kosovo initiated the formation of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) (Wedgwood 1999). KLA attacks against Serbian targets began in 1996, and in 1998 elections were held to establish a provincial assembly (Paul et al. 2010b). From 1996 through 1998 the KLA engaged in guerilla and terrorist actions against Serbian targets, but took care to avoid civilian targets (Paul et al. 2010b).

In 1998, Yugoslav forces initiated a military campaign against the Albanian Kosovars, attacking insurgents, civilians, and peaceful demonstrators alike (Kitsiosis 2000). During the course of the conflict, nearly 40% of the total population of Kosovo had fled the region, entering neighboring countries as refugees. A campaign of ethnic cleansing by Yugoslav forces prompted NATO action against Yugoslavia, which began in 1999 following the breakdown of peace talks (Paul, et al. 2010b).

With the exceptions of Liberia and the latter two conflicts in Afghanistan, 9 of the 12 conflicts accounted for by this solution occurred in areas that were under imperial control and were driven by efforts to expel power holders that were viewed as culturally inappropriate

outsiders or occupying regimes (see Wimmer and Min 2006). Liberia, and the conflicts in Afghanistan are dissimilar insofar as they do not represent ethnic conflicts (Wimmer, et al. 2009), and they were not initiated with the intention to establish new national boundaries (Paul, et al. 2010b). However, all 12 of these cases are characterized by power disputes in weak states with long-standing tribal or ethnic power structures in which any acts of violence by the existing state regime to retain control would very unlikely have been viewed as legitimate. What is evident in all of these cases is that, in the presence of multiple ethnic, religious, or tribal groups competing for power, the exercise of force by actors that violate the like-over-like principle of governance will be broadly viewed as illegitimate.

### *Solution 3: Illegitimacy through Factionalization*

The third solution has a high degree of overlap with Solution 2, with 43% raw coverage but only 17% unique coverage. Only Moldova, Sudan, and Tajikistan are uniquely represented. However, this solution is distinguished by the fact that all of the cases involved both non-professional forces and support to the government by strong external militaries. While the majority of the 11 cases accounted for by this pathway share similar general characteristics to those in solution 2, the presence of external militaries supporting generally weak states indicates a key distinction with meaningful implications. As noted earlier, scholarship on violent conflict has shown that the overwhelming majority of military interventions into civil conflict by external states are engaged to serve the interests of the intervening state (Franck and Rodley 1973; Gizelis and Kosek 2005). Existing historical narratives of the cases represented by this solution show a pattern of factionalization during the course of these conflicts, as new actors with distinct interests sought to affect the regional power dynamics, ultimately weakening the legitimacy of the existing governments and their actions. Tajikistan, which is unique to Solution 3, illustrates

this process. Describing Russian involvement in the conflict in Tajikistan, Gleason (2002) notes that, “Officially, Moscow was neutral. In practice, however, the peacekeepers favored the communist-era political elite.” (p. 8). As Russia maintained responsibility for Tajik military operations, much of the territory came under the control of military commanders who divided the land among themselves. Gleason continues, “The civil war divided Tajikistan on several dimensions simultaneously, splitting region against region, clan against clan, religion against religion, and internationalists against nationalists.” (Gleason 2002: 8).

This process of factionalization is further illustrated by the conflict in Liberia, which began in 1989 when Charles Taylor led the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) into Liberia, where they were “supplemented by dissidents from Sierra Leone, the Gambia, and Guinea, as well as an attachment of Burkinabe soldiers” (Paul, et al. 2010b: 126). The government responded to attacks on the capital with brutal tactics, which fostered greater support for the insurgents. The forces on each side split into factions, largely along ethnic lines, resulting in multiple competing groups engaged in the conflict. By the end of 1990, as the violence continued to devolve, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) deployed peacekeeping forces (Adebajo 2002). However, as Paul and colleagues (2010b: 128-129) write:

“Although ECOMOG was sent as a peacekeeping contingent, it betrayed its neutrality very early in the conflict, aligning with Krahn warlords...and the leadership of the [Armed Forces of Liberia] AFL. Taylor’s NPFL received support from Cote d’Ivoire and Libya, while Guinea provided backing to the Kromah faction of [the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia].

These were not relationships of altruism, but rather marriages of convenience that allowed the respective sponsors to exploit Liberia's resource for financial gain.”

Access to Liberia's natural resources was a central motivation of the intervention efforts by external states. As a result, the support of these external states did not provide a unified front for either side, but rather exacerbated the tensions between factions and allowed for continued friction between the actors involved. Following the capture and execution of the leader of the AFL, the ECOMOG commander selected a new interim head of the government (Paul, et al. 2010b). However, given the lack of neutrality of the ECOMOG forces, this did little to bolster the legitimacy of the government, instead further damaging the legitimacy of the state's actions.

These cases illustrate how external state intervention can lead to factionalization, in which case the legitimacy of the government and its actions are undermined. However, the cases in this solution also highlight the co-occurrence of each of the three mechanisms found to produce perceptions that state-sanctioned violence is illegitimate. With the exception of Tajikistan, Moldova, and Sudan, the majority of the cases in this solution are also represented by Solution 2, and in many cases the use of generalized violence which characterizes Solution 1 also appears in the cases represented by Solutions 2 and 3. These overlaps suggest that while each of these mechanisms are sufficient to produce perceptions that state-sanctioned violence is illegitimate, no single mechanisms is necessary to produce perceptions of illegitimacy, and all can occur in tandem.

## **Discussion**

These analyses show that there is a causal asymmetry between legitimacy and illegitimacy, and demonstrate that the conditions for illegitimacy transcend specific cultural and



national contexts with general mechanisms that operate across multiple countries and continents. The results of the fsQCA for legitimacy shows some consistency in the effects of specific conditions on perceptions that state-sanctioned violence was appropriate compared to the violence enacted by the insurgents. However, a review of the historical details shows that these results were associated with the outcome of the violence rather than the way the violence was enacted. This was illustrated by the Democratic Republic of Congo, where there was extensive violence by both sides, but the government was viewed as comparatively better as their efforts led to a settlement.

Perceptions of illegitimacy, on the other hand, were shaped by the forms of violence and the status of the actors. These conditions are anchored to collective circumstances rather than a consensus regarding the utility and comparative value of the violence. There may be no circumstances where a civilian population in an area of conflict would view the violence as good. Rather, when assessing the legitimacy of violence, proportionality and positive outcomes are the rubrics for evaluation (see Holmes 1989; Gardam 1993). As McWilliams (2011[1971]) suggests, such evaluations may vary greatly from one person or community to the next. It is intuitive that what is proportional to the person whose family has been spared may seem entirely unproportional to someone who has lost their family to violence. Yet, the mechanisms resulting in illegitimacy are experienced on a collective level. In Nicaragua, Somoza's forces bombed entire cities thought to be sympathetic to the Sandinistas. In Turkey, entire communities were dislocated, and their villages destroyed. In Rwanda, ethnic-lives were slaughtered by ethnic-others, regardless of personal politics or class.

This distinction between evaluations of experience at the collective versus individual levels is suggestive of why legitimacy is so consistently observed as varying from case to case,

and context to context. The legitimacy of violence is not simply a question of best practice or cultural sensitivity, but an iterative, relational process that is rooted in the actions of the government, the actions of their opponent, and the social conditions within which those actions occur. The measures of legitimate and illegitimate force used in these analyses explicitly account for the relativity of the constructs, but the results of the analyses show the conditions producing legitimacy to be far more contingent on context and outcome, while illegitimacy is rooted in the immediate realities of the perpetrators and their actions. Ample research has shown that perceptions of legitimacy are shaped by social systems and shared beliefs (Suchman 1995; Johnson, et al. 2006). However, while standards for legitimacy are shared at a collective level, evaluations against those standards are contingent on the ones making evaluations. As Stryker notes, “Aggregation of individual support produces the collective approval constituting legitimacy...” (Stryker 1994: 856).

Because the illegitimacy of violence is determined by the acts of violence rather than outcomes and justifications, illegitimacy stands as a more stable construct with conditions that transcend individual cases and contexts. This stability provides a bridge between the analytically challenging variability of perceptions or assumptions of rightness and acceptability, and the theoretical importance of these perceptions and assumptions for understanding conflict processes.

Beyond its theoretical implications, this asymmetry stands to inform the development of policy responses to civil conflict. Scholars of conflict have increasingly shown that external intervention cannot produce lasting peace. As Wimmer (2013) writes, “Nation building from the outside, then, is not just difficult but structurally impossible.” However, the findings here do reveal conditions under which perceptions of illegitimacy can be expected to occur, and by

avoiding those practices, states can eliminate guaranteed barriers to the legitimation of their actions and the pursuit of peace. As Wickham-Crowley (1993) shows, the conditions that lead to success in revolution are distinct from the conditions that result in failure. Similarly, while no one policy for the use of violence will be uniformly perceived as legitimate, this research details conditions under which violence will be consistently seen as illegitimate.

Beyond the study of violence, these findings may have implications for other areas of research, most notably the study of symbolic boundaries. As efforts to establish a general theory of symbolic boundaries continue to propel a growing body of sociological research (see Bail 2008), the idea that two sides of a conceptual distinction such as legitimacy (Gieryn 1983) are asymmetric may offer valuable insights. Drawing a parallel between legitimacy as a conceptual distinction and the literature on symbolic boundaries, the results of this research suggest that the effects of boundary work may actually be far more consistent across cultural contexts than has been shown by existing research (see Lamont and Molnar 2002; Bail 2008). However, analysts may only be able to observe these commonalities by explicitly distinguishing and attending to both sides of the boundary.

## **Endnotes**

1. Detailed information on the coding procedures was provided by Colin Clarke and Christopher Paul via personal communication.
2. The decisive phase of the conflict in Burundi lasted from 1999 to 2003. In 2002 a ceasefire was negotiated, and in 2003 a member of the Hutu majority took over the presidency in a government that had long been led by members of the Tutsi minority (Paul, et al. 2010b: 246). In Afghanistan, after the soviet-backed government was ousted in 1992, the country was led by a coalition of former mujahedeen. However, in 1996—the final year of a three-year conflict

phase—the Taliban had established control (Paul, et al. 2010b: 189). In both cases, these changes represented meaningful shifts in the structure of ethnic representation in each country, but did not represent the conditions throughout the majority of each phase. To focus exclusively on the conditions either before or after these changes would omit important features of these qualitatively defined phases.

3. The results produced by the fsQCA software included four solutions rather than three.

However, two of the solutions shared all cases except for one each, and there was no substantive distinction between the solutions. The analysis presented combines these two solutions, which is now represented by the third pathway.

4. "According to a 2004 report compiled from the Global Internally Displaced Peoples Database, the number of people displaced as a result of this conflict has been estimated at as many as 4.5 million. See: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/library/Europe/Turkey/pdf/Turkey-April-2004.pdf>. Retrieved July 14, 2014.

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Table A1: Truth table for analysis of legitimate violence

Government Legitimacy	Positive Relations	Avoided Culturally Offensive Behavior	Non-professional forces	Popular Support	External support to Counterinsurgency	External Support to Insurgency	% Powerless population	Share excluded	N	Legitimate Force (outcome)	Consistency
1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.978793
1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0.75
0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0.705882
0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0.649351
0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	3	0	0.536585
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0.507493
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0.474951
0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0.430108
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0.361702
0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	0.314852
0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0.3125
0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0.255319
0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0.25
0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0.25
0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0.212766
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

Table A2: Truth table for analysis of illegitimate violence

Government Legitimacy	Positive Relations	Avoid Culturally Offensive Behavior	Non-professional forces	Popular Support	External support to Counterinsurgency	External Support to Insurgency	% Powerless population	Share excluded	N	Legitimate Force (outcome)	Consistency
0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	1
0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0.962766
0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	3	1	0.926829
0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0.914894
0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0.875994
0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0.851064
0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0.666667
0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0.652529
0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0.649351
0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0.645161
1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0.5
0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0.377358
1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0.281690
1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

## **APPENDIX B:**

### **The Paradox of Legitimacy: Resilience, Successes, and the Multiple Identities of the**

#### **Kurdistan Workers' Party in Turkey**

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#### **Abstract**

Legitimacy is widely recognized as necessary for the resilience and success of revolutionary groups, yet successful revolutionary groups are frequently viewed as illegitimate during the course of conflicts. I examine this paradox through the case of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey. Combining historical research with analysis of the discourse used by the group to frame their goals and to cultivate expectations among constituents, I detail how the PKK took advantage of the benefits of legitimacy from various audiences over time until the associated expectations became unwanted constraints. I show how multiple shifting sources of legitimacy allowed the PKK to be perceived as illegitimate by various audiences without compromising their capacity for resilience and success as they retained support within a broadly legitimated movement for Kurdish rights in Turkey. This research offers broad new insights into the cumulative effects of multiple sources of legitimacy, the relationality of legitimacy, and the benefits of illegitimacy.

Since the 1940s, revolution and civil war have been the dominant form of violent conflict to occur throughout the world (Fearon and Laitin 2003). Contemporary scholarship widely recognizes legitimacy as critical to the resilience and success of actors enmeshed in intrastate war (see Bakker, Raab and Milward 2012; Goldstone 2008; Lomperis 1996; McFate and Jackson 2006; Wimmer and Min 2006). However, investigation into the historical details of many civil wars and revolutions reveals that successful groups often *lack* legitimacy during the course of those conflicts. Groups such as the Nicaraguan Resistance (Contras) or Bosnian Serbs engaged in egregious human rights violations and violence against civilians before winning popular elections or securing an independent territory (Human Rights Watch 1994; Paul, Clarke and Grill 2010; also see Held 2005 for a discussion of the mid-conflict legitimacy of the African National Congress in South Africa). More broadly, historical data on 30 cases of insurgent revolution around the world showed that during the course of these conflicts, nearly three quarters (16 out of 22; ~72%) of the successful insurgencies were “delegitimized due to civilian casualties or other unacceptable behavior” (Paul et al. 2010).

This presents a paradox: if legitimacy is necessary for the resilience and success of revolutionary groups, how do revolutionary groups that are viewed as illegitimate during the course of a conflict achieve resilience and success? I examine this paradox through the case of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in Turkey. The PKK was founded in 1978 with the goal of securing an independent Kurdistan in southeast Turkey through the use of violence, but has since abandoned its pursuit of independence and shifted its demands towards democratic reforms and federalism in the Kurdish region of Turkey (see Öcalan 2012). The PKK has used suicide bombings in public areas, engaged in punishment and repression of Kurdish civilians and its own members, and violently opposed Kurdish rights efforts operating outside the group’s purview.

These actions have repeatedly cost the group legitimacy in the eyes of various audiences, undermining sources of material and social support. Yet, the PKK has proven extremely resilient, surviving more than 30 years of active military intervention, state efforts to eliminate its bases of support, and the capture of its founder and leader in 1999. Further, while definitions of success for violent non-state actors are often articulated only vaguely (see Cronin 2009)<sup>1</sup>, the group has achieved successes by multiple measures. In spite of not having achieved an independent Kurdistan or a federalist state, the PKK has emerged as a logistically powerful and symbolically potent representative of Kurds in Turkey over the last three decades, which saw the greatest expansion of Kurdish rights and recognition in the history of the Turkish Republic (Bacık and Coskun 2011; Kirişci and Winrow 1997:215). Further, the PKK's reported role in combatting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (see Parkinson 2014) has led to the observation that, "[The PKK's] terrorist status is falling out of date. At this point it has to be recognized for the constructive role it can play in Iraq and the wider region" (Editors, Bloomberg View 2014). The seeming contradiction between the PKK's resilience and various successes in light of the apparent illegitimacy of the group's actions over time offers a valuable lens for the study of this paradox.

In this article, I combine historical research and analysis of discourse to examine the cumulative effects of legitimation by multiple audiences, and assess how multiple shifting sources of legitimacy and illegitimacy shaped the evolving success and resilience of the PKK. I analyze how the PKK framed its efforts, cultivating multiple identities with associated expectations for legitimate behavior. I examine how these identities were received by various audiences, and assess the effects of actions by the group that violated the expectations that were created.

I begin by outlining the literature on legitimacy in violent conflict, then introduce a novel framework for analyzing legitimacy which integrates research and insights from organizational and social movement studies. This provides a foundation for the subsequent analysis. I proceed by detailing the origins of the PKK and the history of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey and discuss key identities adopted by the PKK. I then juxtapose the history of the PKK's actions and sources of support against the discourses that the group employed, and examine how the correspondence between their discourses and actions affected audience support and the subsequent successes and resilience of the group.

Through this analysis I show how the PKK found both resilience and successes by emerging as the most prominent face within a broadly legitimated Kurdish resistance movement. I show that they benefited from the flexibility afforded by violating expectations associated with legitimacy when those expectations introduced unwanted constraints. More generally, I discuss the implications of multiple shifting sources of legitimacy. I propose that for revolutionary groups that engage multiple audiences, illegitimacy can provide valuable flexibility, and it inhibits the success of the group only to the degree that it compromises their base of material support and their broader legitimacy as representatives of the motivating ideological goals of the conflict.

### **Legitimacy in Intrastate War**

Diverse approaches to legitimacy in violent conflict have resulted in often divergent frameworks for understanding the nature and significance of legitimacy: from loosely coupled realist and neo-realist perspectives (see Waltz 2000) that orient evaluations to the material and security needs of an actor, to subjectivist approaches for which “legitimacy is to a large extent in the eye of the beholder, and not fixed to any external standard” (Bakker, et al. 2012:48).



However, in spite of this lack of consensus, a review of the scholarship on intrastate conflict reveals general patterns in the how the concept of legitimacy is defined and its effects understood.

Broadly, legitimacy can be defined as the perception or assumption that something is right or appropriate within the bounds of a system of norms, beliefs, or definitions (Suchman 1995:574). The basis of assertions that legitimacy is critical in intrastate conflict is its widely observed benefits. At a tangible level, when a group is legitimated by an audience, their legitimacy facilitates material and social support (Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009), introduces otherwise inaccessible opportunities and structural resources (Hagen and Rymond-Richmond 2008), and increases members' commitment and willingness to engage in risky behaviors (Bakker, Raab and Milward 2012). At a more general level, the importance of legitimacy is rooted in the assertion that revolution is fundamentally a contest of ideologies (see Beck 2011:168). When conflicts are motivated by broader ideas that challenge existing frameworks of political action and authority, success is achieved through the broad legitimation of those alternative ideologies. This is typically represented by recognition of the revolutionary movement's claims to power by a relevant audience (Cronin 2009; McFate and Jackson 2006). As such, legitimacy at this broader level increases security and stability, which allows actors to move beyond vying for power and begin to utilize what power they have already gained.

These levels of legitimacy are often viewed as synergistic based on the assumption that groups that enjoy legitimacy are also viewed as legitimate representatives of the broader ideological motivations for conflict. However, this view fails to account for the multiplicity of actors and ideologies that motivate revolutionary movements. Such movements are generally comprised of multiple actors and parties (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001), with distinct and

evolving resources, ideologies, and agendas, who unite or work in tandem toward a broader effort framed by alternatives to existing regimes. Highlighting the relevance of multiple distinct actors in his assessment of why some revolutionary movements succeed while others fail, Robert H. Dix (1984: 423) argued that the ability to “assemble a broad ‘negative’ [opposition] coalition of diverse domestic groups and foreign supporters... may be essential for success.”

In her research on transnational networks of Kurdish activism, Nicole Watts (2004) illustrated the importance of this distinction for the broader contemporary movement in which the PKK is embedded. During the late 1970s and through the 1980s, the PKK was one of multiple groups competing for dominance within Turkey (Marcus 2007: 34). The pro-Kurdish movement now represents a transnational network, and the PKK remains one of multiple groups seeking expanded rights for Kurds (Watts 2004). As Watts noted, other pro-Kurdish groups have sought to distinguish themselves from the PKK and the violence employed to advance their struggle, maintaining a “wary distance from the PKK and other PKK-dominated organizations...” (Watts 2004: 133). As detailed below, while the PKK’s association with this broader pro-Kurdish movement has been a major factor in their resilience and the successes they have achieved, they remain a distinct entity within this broader movement.

While often overlooked in research on violent conflict, the difference between legitimacy at the level of the group versus the level the movement illustrates the complex relationality of legitimacy. Each group must contend with its own legitimacy in the eyes of its supporters, the legitimacy of the broader movement, the group’s legitimacy within that broader movement, and how each of these intersect or diverge. Each source of legitimacy introduces distinct standards and expectations that shift as audiences and contexts for legitimacy evolve (see Zelditch 2001).

This can introduce meaningful constraints given that the benefits of legitimacy require behavior that conforms to the expectations of the evaluating audience (see Hannan and Freeman 1977).

The implications of potential constraints associated with the expectations of legitimacy have not been problematized in previous research on violent conflict, yet they suggest a more nuanced concept of legitimacy that better addresses the paradox outlined above. Legitimacy is typically treated as a unitary construct (see Beetham 1991:19-20). However, as groups engage multiple audiences, they are subject to multiple sources of legitimacy which can increase constraints but also reduce dependence on any given audience. In this work, I draw on concepts from research on organizational identities and social movement framing to outline an approach to analyzing legitimacy in violent conflict that accounts for the potential multiplicity of audiences and identities that shape legitimacy of an oppositional group, both in their own right and as representatives of a broader movement.

### **An Identity-based Framework for Legitimacy**

Within the literature on organizational identities, legitimacy is represented by an audience's acceptance of a collective actor as fitting into a given identity or social category, whereas illegitimacy is represented as the failure to fit in (Zuckerman 1999:1400; see also Hsu, Hannan and Koçak 2009; Hsu, Hannan and Polos 2011). Legitimacy within a given identity is assessed based on the organization's ability to meet the expectations associated with the categories they occupy. In addition to the legitimacy of an actor within a identity, each identity is subject to evaluations of legitimacy. The legitimacy of an identity is determined by the degree to which audiences understand the identity as a meaningful basis for evaluation. By examining which identities are treated as a meaningful basis for evaluation—as indicated by the degree to which support is provided based on a group's association with a given identity—the legitimacy

or illegitimacy of the group can be evaluated based on how their actions adhere to the associated norms and expectations of that identity.

When and how organizational identities emerge has been the subject of a vibrant body of research (see Galaskiewicz and Barringer 2012). Research in the population ecology tradition initially traced organizational identities to the actions and orientations of the organizations themselves (Hannan and Freeman 1989). However, later research shifted away from organizational attributes towards audience perceptions (Carroll and Swaminathan 2000). Subsequent scholarship has focused on identities granted to an organization by external agents who evaluate the degree to which an organization fits within the pre-existing expectations associated with a given category (Hannan, Polos and Carroll 2007; Zuckerman 1999). More recently, Greta Hsu and associates (2009) argue that it is both the production and reception of an identity that shape the way identities impact success and legitimacy. However, across this literature, the categories from which identities emerge are presumed to be consensual and taken-for-granted.

This latter point highlights a key difference between the categories that emerge in markets and the identities that define groups engaged in intrastate conflict. Because these conflicts entail contests of ideology, identity construction for revolutionary groups often involves contentious framing processes as these groups seek to engage multiple audiences while also contending with counter-framing efforts (Fligstein and McAdam 2011; Jansen 2007). As a result, applying an identity-based approach to legitimacy in the context of intrastate conflict requires rethinking the origin and formation of these identities.

Research on social movement framing processes offers a bridge between the categorical framework for legitimacy detailed in the literature on organizational identities and the processes

of identity construction for groups engaged in intrastate conflict. Framing processes are subject to change and contestation, and often rely on multiple pre-existing categories and ideational elements as groups work to appeal to diverse audiences that “vary in terms of their relative interests, values, beliefs, and knowledge...” (Benford and Snow 2000:630). Frames can nevertheless signify identities and strategies of action, which in turn impact audience expectations (Clemens 1996). Moreover, frames have been productively operationalized as organizational properties, which can be studied through the public discourses those organizations employ (Snow 2004:387). Elizabeth A. Clemens (1996) specifically connects concepts of organizational form and identity with the process of framing, using analysis of movement discourses to demonstrate how forms act as frames that shape and inform group identity. While research on social movements seldom explicitly addresses questions of legitimacy (see Haunss 2007), the conceptual apparatus developed in the framing literature provides an avenue for understanding how identities are developed by groups engaged in conflict, which in turn form the basis of audiences’ evaluations of legitimacy.

Beyond providing a dynamic framework for the analysis of legitimacy in violent conflict, conceptualizing legitimacy through the dual lenses of organizational identities and framing processes is suggestive of Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam’s (2011; 2012) concept of strategic action fields (SAF). This concept provides a theoretical lens that offers valuable insights for understanding the interactive processes of legitimation and delegitimation across multiple audiences. Integrating concepts from organizational studies and social movement research, the concept of SAF provides a synthetic framework for understanding processes of contention and change as collective actors “vie for strategic advantage in and through interaction with other groups...” (Fligstein and McAdam 2011:2). As in revolutionary movements, SAFs are only

rarely organized around consensual or taken-for-granted concepts of reality. Within SAFs, actors use interpretive frames to make sense of the actions of others. However, the way these frames are understood and constructed will vary as actors change relative position within the SAF. Through these processes, actors are able to make continual changes in their positions and the frames they employ. From Fligstein and McAdam's framework, we would expect that as conditions change through exogenous shock (Fligstein and McAdam 2012), secondary stakeholder influence (e.g., King and Soule 2007), or other conflict processes, revolutionary groups will also shift the frames they employ, subsequently reshaping their legitimacy in the eyes of various audiences.

I integrate these diverse insights in an operationalization of legitimacy that accounts for the cumulative and interactive effects of multiple audiences and the potential for change over time in both audience perceptions and the group's identity construction. In this approach, the legitimacy of an identity is measured by the degree to which actors provide support to a revolutionary group *based on the group's adoption of a given identity* during the period in which that identity is claimed. Support includes material support (such as joining the group, or providing training, weapons, or other resources), or verbal support (such as publicly stating support for the ideals of the group or advocating on their behalf). This approach to measuring the legitimacy of an identity entails examining the discourse employed by a group to frame its efforts, then examining how those identities are invoked in audiences' explanations of support.

From these legitimated identities, the legitimacy of *the group* is measured by examining how their actions correspond to the promises and expectations embedded in their framing of the identities they claim to occupy. Illegitimacy is indicated by a failure to conform to role expectations. This operationalization (summarized in table 1) can be applied in the analysis of

Table 1: Measurement of the legitimacy of identities and groups

Level	Operationalization	Units of Observation
Identity	Support provided to actors based on their membership in a role/category	Action/behavior (provision of support); discourse (justification)
Group	Correspondence between identity-based expectations and observable behavior	Discourse (identities claimed); action/behavior

legitimacy at both the level of the group as representatives of multiple constituencies, and at the level of the group as the representative of a broader movement.

## Methods

For the analysis of the PKK, I collected data on the political and social history of the broader Kurdish movement, the history of the PKK's actions and sources of support, and the discourse employed by the group over time. I relied on secondary sources to trace the founding of the PKK to questions surrounding Kurdish rights that emerged from the Turkish War of Independence following World War I. This historical context framed my analysis of the primary data in an effort to differentiate between identities that were specific to the PKK and the identity that link them to the broader conflicts over Kurdish rights in Turkey. I constructed a history of the group's activities from its official formation in 1978 through March 2013. Because the PKK is still active and their history is entrenched in on-going political debates within Turkey, no authoritative case history exists. As such, I reviewed a wide range of secondary sources to construct an initial narrative of the group's history, and then drew on primary documents to further elaborate the narrative and validate key assertions.

To analyze the discourses through which the PKK constructed identities and expectations, I collected materials produced and/or distributed by the PKK along with public

statements by PKK members between 1978 and 2013. Using LexisNexis and Google, I compiled English and Turkish language materials published in print media and academic studies of the PKK that were based on in-person interviews, notes from periods of embedded observation with guerilla troops, or extensive historical reviews. I coded these materials for claims of direct representation of specific peoples, ideas, ideologies, or goals during this time period. This allowed me to evaluate the identities that the group sought to represent, and their associated promises and expectations. Following my analysis of the PKK's public discourse, I used media accounts, official reports, public databanks, and published studies to assess whether specific identities adopted by the PKK were invoked by audiences in discussing reasons for supporting the group. This allowed me to assess the degree to which the identities themselves were legitimated.

### **Kurds in Turkey and the Origins of the PKK**

Since the PKK's first attack against the Turkish state in 1984, their conflict with the Turkish government has resulted in more than 35,000 casualties—more than five times the combined casualties of all other conflicts engaged by the Turkish Republic since its formation in 1923. The PKK is unique in the context of Kurdish separatist movements. From its inception in 1978, the group has advocated a violent approach to secession. As a result, the PKK has been the central focus of Turkish military activities since the mid-1980s, and has affected Turkey's international relations throughout Europe and the Middle East (Olson 2004: 3).

While Kurds compose between 10 and 25 percent of Turkey's population,<sup>2</sup> throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Turkish Republic has refused to recognize the existence of Kurds as a distinct ethnic group and has maintained long-standing policies to promote Turkish nationalism. These policies, which trace back to reforms introduced in the early development of the Republic,



expressly restrict the expression of Kurdish culture, the use of Kurdish language, and the expression of Kurdish nationalism (Öktem 2011; Watts 2006; Yeğen 1999).

Following its defeat in World War I, the Ottoman Empire was partitioned among Western Powers based on the allies' political and economic interests. Territorial uncertainties following the Ottoman Empire's defeat created the opportunity for groups such as the Kurds to benefit from the division and reallocation of power within the region. However, following the victory of Turkish forces led by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) in 1923, Kurdish tribes seeking an independent Kurdistan were forced to contend with strengthened Turkish nationalists (Olson 1989). It was in this period that Atatürk introduced reforms and policies that restricted the rights and recognition of the Kurdish minority. These reforms led to the forced evacuation of Kurds from the Kurdistan region of Anatolia and the subsequent relocation of Turks to the region; the abolition of the Caliphate; restrictions on language, with Turkish being the only language allowed in schools and courts; the omission of Kurdistan and Kurdish town names from books and maps; and military raids on Kurdish villages, among others points of contention.

These reforms were cited by Kurdish officers in their preparations for an armed revolt on behalf of the Society for Kurdish Independence. Early efforts aimed at gaining independence for Kurdistan led to the failed Kurdish rebellion of 1925. Among the results of this rebellion most relevant to contemporary Kurdish issues were the Turkish government's increased promotion of Turkish nationalism, suppression of Kurdish nationalism, and the reduction of Islam's power as a mechanism for unity and cooperation, and as a vehicle for opposition to other governments<sup>3</sup> (Olson 1989:152-153). As Nicole Watts (1999: 631) noted, this rebellion made preventing the development of a Kurdish cultural and political movement a longstanding priority of the Turkish state.

Between 1925 and 1938, the Turkish Republic suppressed a series of Kurdish uprisings that were staged on a smaller scale than the 1925 rebellion. In 1960 the Turkish military staged its first coup d'état against the government in Ankara, which introduced a new era of more liberal economic and political policies in Turkey (Marcus 2007:307). However, this period did not lead to significantly more liberal policies for the expression of Kurdish nationalism, and in 1965 the first underground Kurdish political party was formed. In 1971, the Turkish military staged a second coup, revoking many of the liberal policies that had been introduced and shutting down recently formed Kurdish and leftist organizations (Marcus 2007:307).

It was around 1970 that Abdullah Öcalan, the founder of the PKK, was introduced to the leftist movement that would form the foundation for the PKK's socialist ideology. In 1972, Öcalan was arrested for participating in a protest movement and was sent to Mamak Military Prison in Ankara, where many other leftist leaders had been imprisoned. As Aliza Marcus (2007:24) quotes Öcalan in speaking of his time in that prison: "This was my transition to becoming a professional revolutionary." In 1973, the first elections following the military coup of 1971 were held and activist Kurdish groups began to form throughout Turkey having decided that the leftist Turkish political parties were not adequately serving their interests.

The PKK was formed as a corrective to the failed efforts of Kurdish separatist movements of the 1970s that had been reluctant to pursue a revolutionary agenda. Following his release from prison, Öcalan began verbally attacking the credibility of other Kurdish rights groups (see Marcus 2007: 34). He argued that these groups were rooted in antiquated feudal systems and not sufficiently progressive in their thinking. With this message, Öcalan began gathering support for his own group and, by the end of 1977 he had gathered more than 250 members. In November 1978, Öcalan and about 20 others gathered in a small town in the

Diyarbakir Province in southeastern Turkey (near both the Syrian and Iraqi border) to officially form the PKK (Öcalan 2012:30) and begin their plans for revolution.

### **Multiple Identities of the PKK**

From organized crime to advocating for Kurdish rights (Roth and Sever 2007), the PKK has been associated with multiple identities, both externally assigned and self-ascribed. In the analysis that follows, I focus specifically on three self-ascribed identities that have been legitimated by diverse audiences. I refer to these identities as the peoples' revolution, advocates for peace and democracy, and advocates for Kurdish rights in Turkey. The former two are specific to the PKK, while the latter represents a broader identity that situates the PKK within the Kurdish rights movement in Turkey.

The identities selected are among those most prominently claimed by the PKK for which there is direct evidence that the identities were legitimated by outside audiences, and the expectations of those identities were violated.<sup>4</sup> The prominence of these identities and the presence of violations provide analytic leverage as they represent the theoretical anomaly that motivates this study (see Stryker 1996). Moreover, while several of the identities adopted by the group share expectations and certain aspects of their framing, the group's identification as a people's revolution and as advocates for peace and democracy are mutually exclusive. Their identity as advocates for Kurdish rights in Turkey is included because this is their key identification with the broader movement, and it is a consistent theme throughout their discourse. Table 2 summarizes these self-ascribed identities.

#### *The People's Revolution*

The PKK's identity as a revolutionary movement by and for the people dominated their discourse for the first 15 years of their operations, and remained in use for another six years until

Table 2: Self-ascribed identities of the PKK

Identities	Dates of identification	Expectation cultivated in association with identities	Audiences with record of invoking identities	Examples of discourse
Advocates for Kurdish rights in Turkey	1978 - 2013	Securing political and social rights and recognition for Kurds in Turkey; maintaining attention to Kurdish issues at a national level.	Kurdish constituents; KDP; PUK.	"We have no other choice. We are fighting to free Kurdistan." - Nouman Salman, 1991  "Anyone who thinks as a Kurd in Turkey is with the PKK." - Abdullah Öcalan, 1998
Advocates for peace and democracy	1989 - 2013	Pursuit of peaceful resolution of the conflict; only retaliatory violence; pursuit of reform within the legal political system.	Kurdish Socialist Party; Kurdish constituents	"We do not worship arms... I am appealing to the Turkish government. I am telling them that there is a peaceful solution, through parliament." - Abdullah Öcalan, 1991
The People's revolutionary movement	1978 - 1999	Commitment to individual rights; commitment to members' empowerment; commitment to equality	Kurdish constituents; Devrimci-yol; DFLP	"The Kurdish revolution is a national democratic revolution." - <i>PKK Manifesto</i> , 1978

1999. While the PKK was formed in a climate of political repression and non-recognition of Kurdish culture, rights, and identity, their distinction from other Kurdish rights/separatist movements has from the outset been their willingness to engage in violence and their socialist orientation. The PKK manifesto, *Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu*, which was first published in 1978, introduced a socialist philosophy that also drew heavily from Marxist discourse. While explicit

references to Marxism faded from the PKK's discourse in the early 1990s, from the outset the group has emphasized a socialist orientation, as reflected in the statement: "The Kurdish revolution is a national democratic revolution" (Öcalan [1978] 1993).

This identity as a revolutionary movement of the people was widely legitimated both by external organizations and by Kurdish constituents. In the 1980s, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DLFP; the largest member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)) offered support to the PKK based on their shared commitment to Marxist revolution. In an interview with Aliza Marcus (2007:56), a military commander for the DLFP explained his group's willingness to train former PKK fighters: "We accepted the Marxist-Leninist groups because we are Marxist-Leninists... We are revolutionaries and we support the revolutionary movement." During the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the PKK's violent socialist agenda helped them expand their base of support as many Turkish Kurds who had suffered oppression under Turkish counter-terrorism policies joined the group.

Expectations associated with this identity are revealed in the discourse engaged by the group. As Öcalan wrote in a 1989 statement prior to the trials of Kurdish activists in Germany, "The party shows our people the will and the way to fight for their rights... we give our people the knowledge as to how the right to self-defense is put into practice" (Öcalan 1992:45). Later, elucidating the role of women in the PKK, he wrote, "We teach her to fight for society and to play a leading role in society" (p. 46).

As further illustrated below, this discourse highlights the cultivation of expectations that the PKK was committed to the individual rights of its members, to providing them with the resources to defend their rights, and to equality within the organization. Further, there is a dominant theme of individual members acting of their own free will.

*Advocates for Peace and Democracy*

Beginning at the height of the group's power in late 1989 with commentary by Öcalan that stated a commitment to peace, the pursuit of peace as the path towards democratic reform became a central component of the discourse employed by PKK leadership. This discursive shift reframed the PKK's use of violence as reactive and their goals as peaceful. For example, during an interview with Günay Aslan (1995), Öcalan was asked if he had any conditions for a new cease-fire and responded, "It has become quite clear that one cannot attain any results through military means." Öcalan continued later in the interview:

"...[Turkey's] policy is massacre. If you continue on this path it will be reciprocated. We are making an appeal to those in Turkey who favor human rights and the solution of the problem through peaceful means" (Aslan 1995).

While the PKK and its leadership did not renounce their own use of violence (as Öcalan stated at his trial in 1999: "The PKK's rebellion using its own methods, and leading the movement as a military force was legitimate" (Öcalan 1999)), the group publically adopted an identity as advocates for a peaceful resolution who would rely on violence only as a reactionary measure. This identity has dominated their framing since 1990.

The PKK's identity as advocates for the peaceful resolution of the Kurdish question received a mixed reception, but was nevertheless legitimated by key groups including Kurdish constituents and representatives of pro-Kurdish political parties. In 1995, Öcalan announced a unilateral ceasefire until such time as Turkey attacked, which received vocal support from Kurdish political leaders both within Turkey and internationally. Further, the PKK's support of legal political parties helped those parties gain progressively greater power in the southeast region of Turkey, indicating support among their constituents for legal and peaceful paths

towards conflict resolution. However, reception to this identity was not wholly positive. At his trial in 1999, Öcalan called for the PKK to seek full democracy in Turkey rather than federalism, independence, or autonomy, as had been their agenda for more than 20 years (Marcus 2007:287). While he later returned to seeking federalism for Kurdistan (Öcalan 2012), the statement in 1999 led to widespread disaffection and extensive desertion among those members who had been fighting for many years. Based on the discourse through which this identity was established, the expectations associated with the role of advocates for peace and democracy include the pursuit of peaceful resolution of the conflict as opposed to violent efforts, the use of violence only as retaliation, and the expectation of favoring reform within the legal political system.

#### *Advocates for Kurdish Rights in Turkey*

While the PKK's identification as leading the people's revolution and as advocates for peace and democracy are specific to the group and shifted over time, the group's identification as advocates for Kurdish rights in Turkey has been present since its inception and connects it to the broader Kurdish rights movement that emerged out of the partition of political power following the Turkish War of Independence (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997). The goal of securing specific rights for Kurds in Turkey is the point of convergence for organizations in the field of activity that the PKK has operated within, from legal political parties that have been accused of association with the PKK, to competing separatist organizations.

It is important to note that this identity has been rooted in the pursuit of Kurdish rights in Turkey rather than an international movement for Kurdish rights. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, efforts aimed at gaining independence or expanded rights for Kurds were underway in Iraq and Iran, with little or no success. While these efforts ran parallel to, and at times intersected with, efforts underway in Turkey, Iraqi Kurds' separate efforts towards regional autonomy

within Iraq and the PKK's more general efforts at developing a political presence in the existing Turkish political establishment clarify that these efforts were not fully unified.

The PKK's identification as advocates for Kurdish rights has been highly effective in garnering support. This was pointedly illustrated in 2009 when PKK rebels were allowed to re-enter Turkey as a part of a policy initiative called the Kurdish Opening (*Kürt Açılımı*). The response to this initiative was a shock to the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), as thousands of Kurds turned out to welcome home 34 PKK rebels who returned during an event in Habur in October, 2009 (Karaveli 2010). Nationalist Turks viewed the opening as an unacceptable affirmation of Kurdish nationalist identity, resulting in a substantial drop in the AKP's approval ratings (Karaveli 2010:20).

The PKK's identification as advocates for Kurdish rights in Turkey has also been a point of reference for other nation states in their evaluations of the PKK. In spite of Turkey's designation of the PKK as a terrorist group since the 1980s, many political parties, states, and international governmental organizations have demonstrated reluctance to designate the PKK as a terrorist organization, or have even directly engaged in talks with the group against the wishes of Turkey. For example, Michael Gunter (1998) noted that he was kept waiting for an interview with Öcalan while the PKK leader met with Greek parliamentarians from the Panhellenic Socialist Movement. Further, the PKK was not included on lists of foreign terrorist organizations by the European Union until 2002, more than a year after the formal establishment of this list (Casier 2010), and remains unspecified as a terrorist group in Russia, indicating a lack of international consensus over how the group should be categorized.

The expectations associated with the PKK's identity advocates for Kurdish rights in Turkey include securing political and social rights and recognition for Kurds in Turkey, and



maintaining attention to these issues at a national level. While these expectations are quite general, given the history of these broader goals and the repeated success of the Turkish state at overcoming organized efforts towards their realization, the significance of these expectations should not be discounted.

In the section that follows, I examine the correspondence between expectations associated with the three identities outlined above and the actions and activities of the PKK. Juxtaposing the frames employed by the PKK to construct their identities against a historical narrative highlights the relationship between the group's actions and identities, and illustrates how inconsistencies between their actions and identities affected the group over time.

### **Discourse, Action, and the Legitimacy of the PKK: 1978 to 2013**

Beginning in 1978 the discourse employed by the PKK was dominated by two key themes: independence for Kurdistan and a communist revolution. The PKK's Manifesto (Öcalan [1978] 1993) begins with an overview of class relations, capital, and the history of colonialism, then continues with topics including the colonization of Kurdistan and the colonial model of the Turkish bourgeoisie before outlining the ideological framework for the Kurdish revolution. It states, "The Kurdistan revolution... is a part of the world proletarian revolution" (Öcalan [1978] 1993:133).

The group's identities as advocates for Kurds in Turkey leading a people's revolution formed the basis for much of the PKK's early support, as Kurdish activists were drawn to the group's commitment to revolution as a means for achieving a separate Kurdistan. As noted above, while efforts to secure an independent Kurdistan had been underway in Turkey prior to the establishment of the PKK, these organizations had demonstrated reluctance in pursuing a violent agenda. From 1978 to 1984, the PKK's efforts were focused largely on becoming the

dominant Kurdish nationalist group in the region (Karaca 2010:28), targeting their violent activity against other Kurdish nationalist groups.

During this period, the actions of the PKK were highly polarizing and significantly damaged relations with Kurdish tribal leaders and other activists who did not believe that the time was appropriate to initiate a revolution. However, in spite of these damages to their legitimacy, the group's radical agenda helped to distinguish the PKK from other groups that had been ineffective in their efforts to secure an independent Kurdistan. This distinction garnered much more attention for the PKK than for other groups that had mobilized around a call for Kurdish rights or separatism. By demonstrating a distinct approach to an issue that had persisted for more than five decades, the PKK substantially expanded their base of support.

In the early 1980s, Öcalan secured support that would propel the PKK to the center of the Kurdish issue in Turkey. In 1980, Öcalan gained access for an estimated 300 PKK members to train in guerilla warfare at camps in Syria that were run by the DFLP, where Nicaraguan Sandinistas, Iranian leftists, and other violent non-state actors had also trained (Marcus 2007:55-58). As discussed above, the central motivation of the DFLP's aid to the PKK was the groups' shared commitment to a people's revolution, and this support was instrumental in the development of the PKK's military capacity.

In addition to direct aid from the DFLP, the PKK gained support from Syria in the form of identity cards and the ability to move freely throughout the country, but with the condition that the PKK would not try to mobilize Syrian Kurds. The group gained another ally in 1982 when the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Northern Iraq allowed the PKK to relocate fighters to the region, which was on the Turkish border and largely controlled by the KDP. After Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Öcalan returned to Syria from Beirut, and by

the middle of 1984 preparations had been made to begin a violent campaign in Turkey (Zehni 2008).

While the PKK continued its aggression towards competing Kurdish groups, following the initiation of its military campaign in 1984 the group began to focus the majority of its attacks on Turkish Military outposts and government offices. Initially, the PKK experienced some successes. However, the Turkish military quickly adjusted its response to better counter the PKK's guerilla tactics (see Marcus 2007:89-106). In 1985, the Turkish government began arming civilians in the southeast, providing them with salaries, weapons, and other resources. These village guards presented a unique challenge to the PKK's populist agenda as they were members of the population that the PKK claimed to represent, but were armed and financed by the Turkish government. In 1986, the PKK began attacking village guards in the southeast, the majority of whom were fellow Kurds (see Zehni 2008:22). The group also implemented a military service law which amounted to an extensive campaign of forced recruitment. Villagers in the Kurdistan region were made to either join the PKK or face retribution. Young men and women were forced to serve with the PKK during this time, and material support was demanded of the villages (Human Rights Watch 2005).

The identity that the PKK's leaders constructed as leading the people's revolution was premised on a commitment to the equality and individual rights of its members, providing them with the resources to defend their rights. However, the group's implementation of military service challenged its legitimacy, leading to disaffection and withdrawal of support. Detailing how these tactics undermined the PKK and began to cause harm to the group, Marcus (2007:117) quotes a former PKK commander: "I knew the military conscription law would cause people to turn against us. You would take people, and then the village would react, then the people you

took would run away, and then you had to kill them”. Further, by attacking fellow leftists and allies of the KDP, the Iraqi Communist Party, the PKK lost the support of the KDP.

By violating the identities they had constructed, the PKK was delegitimized in the eyes of many constituents they claimed to represent and lost a valuable ally. Yet, in spite of the widespread loss of legitimacy in the Kurdistan region, the group’s tactics bolstered support among radical Kurdish activists in other parts of Turkey. The PKK’s violent actions also put them in a position as the central target of the Turkish state’s efforts to suppress Kurdish activism which elevated their public profile. As a result, while the illegitimacy resulting from the PKK’s use of violence and implementation of military conscription damaged the group in the eyes of many Kurdish constituents, it advanced its overall efforts. Further, realizing that its attacks on the villages had cost the group support among the civilian population, in 1988 the leadership renounced earlier killings of civilians and claimed that the group’s campaign against the civilian population had been the unsanctioned work of a few rebels (Marcus 2007:118).

The notoriety that the PKK gained made it a focal point for Kurdish resistance efforts outside of the southeast of Turkey, as disaffected Kurds sought recourse for the repression of their political and cultural rights. In spite of the PKK’s repression of villagers, during the late 1980s to early 1990s, membership expanded rapidly through voluntary enlistment of Kurds from central and northwest Turkey. As the PKK moved into urban centers, there was an influx of activist students from the capital city of Ankara and other major cities (Marcus 2007:131-134). Yusuf Dunder, a Kurdish man from a small town in the Mardin province, stated in 1990, “the young men here, from 15 to 30 all support the PKK... we still have this government that demands we act the same as Turks but always discriminates against us as Kurds” (Pope 1990: 13). By the early 1990s, the group had expanded to an estimated seventeen thousand members

(Özcan 2007), increasing its power and profile in spite of its loss of legitimacy among multiple audiences.

The increase of support was further propelled by the Turkish regime's efforts to crush the PKK. In response to the PKK's common practice of coercive recruitment tactics, the Turkish military forcibly relocated Kurdish villagers into major urban centers that proved to be fertile areas for PKK recruitment. According to a 2013 report by the Human Rights Research Commission of the Turkish Parliament, from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, the Turkish government displaced an estimated 386,360 villagers (İnsan Haklarını İnceleme Komisyonu 2013).<sup>5</sup> According to Human Rights Watch (2005), this displacement resulted in the elimination of more than 3,000 villages in the Kurdish region of Turkey.

It was during this time of expanding power in 1989 and 1990 that discourse advocating for peace and democracy was introduced. In 1989, Öcalan (1992:46) wrote, "Our wish is peace, friendship, and solidarity between people." He identified the PKK as a democratic movement committed to helping the people of Kurdistan fight for their rights. He wrote, "You see, dear friends, we are being attacked. There is only one reason for this: we take care of our people and we take our fate in our own hands" (Öcalan 1992:46).

While this period saw a dramatic expansion of power for the organization, the influx of members was viewed by PKK leadership as a potential threat because it raised the risk of infiltration by the Turkish government and reduced the flexibility and covert capacity of the organization. In response to this potential threat, Öcalan initiated efforts to remove potential infiltrators. What began as the summary execution of members who were suspected of being government agents developed into a broad program of seeking out traitors and using torture to elicit confessions, leading to hysteria within the PKK (Marcus 2007:136-137).

As it became clear that these executions would undermine the legitimacy of the organization in the eyes of its members, the PKK began holding trials for those suspected of being traitors in an effort to reform the process of weeding out double agents (Marcus 2007:137). However, these trials did little to reduce the executions. According to the 2013 Turkish Parliamentary report from the Human Rights Research Commission, by 1993 there were 727 known executions by the PKK of its own members or members of affiliated groups. The report estimates that the actual number is much higher (İnsan Haklarını İnceleme Komisyonu 2013).

These actions stood in direct contradiction to the commitments espoused in the PKK's public discourse and, subsequently, violated the expectations associated with their identity as advocates for peace and democracy. These behavioral violations formed the basis for dissent at the command level. In 1990, a high ranking PKK leader named Mehmet Cayit Sener attempted to take control of the organization away from Öcalan and put it in the hands of the central committee. After threat of retribution by Öcalan, Sener and others fled and attempted to undercut the existing organization by creating a "revival" PKK.

While these practices resulted in desertion by high ranking members and fractionalization within the organization, they simultaneously consolidated Öcalan's power within the remaining organization and cemented the loyalty of those who had not been persecuted during this period in which the group's network of operatives was dramatically expanded. Through this expanded and strengthened network, Öcalan overcame the internal rebellion and retained the central command of the organization. As a result, the actions that contradicted the PKK's free and egalitarian philosophy ultimately strengthened Öcalan's position and allowed him to obtain greater control and dramatically expand the organization's tactical capacities.

The PKK continued its attacks until 1993 when a unilateral ceasefire was declared. In spite of this display on the part of the PKK, the Turkish government offered no concessions either militarily or politically. The ceasefire ended when PKK militants stopped a bus full of off-duty Turkish soldiers and civilians and executed most of them (Marcus 2007). In January of 1995, the Turkish military staged a six-week campaign into Northern Iraq in an effort to eliminate PKK bases. An estimated 3,000 members of the PKK were killed.

In spite of these losses, the PKK survived and the military action by the Turkish government further politicized and internationalized the Kurdish issue in Turkey (Somer 2005). After losing much of its military capacity, in June of 1995 the PKK began a suicide bombing campaign in the major cities of Turkey. In spite of the discourse framing their identity as advocates for peace and democracy which specified that they would only use violence in retaliation, these suicide attacks did not represent retaliation against specific acts of government violence. Rather, they represented a shift in the violent behavior of the organization away from high profile guerilla raids to more clearly identifiable acts of categorical terrorism (see Goodwin 2006). These attacks also coincided with an increasing emphasis on peace in the PKK's discourse. As Öcalan stated in an interview with Gunay Aslan on September 23, 1995:

“It has become quite clear that one cannot attain any results through military means... With the exception of a handful of warmongers, no one is happy with the current trend of events... We want to initiate a [ceasefire] similar to the one we initiated in 1993 in a bid to show good will” (Aslan 1995).

In spite of re-framing their group as advocates for peace and democracy, the period from 1990 through 1999 was the most violent in the conflict. The 2013 report by the Human Rights Research Commission of the Turkish Parliament shows that on average there were

approximately 198 civilian casualties per year from 1984 to 2012. However, from 1993, when the PKK declared its first ceasefire, to 1999, the average number of civilian casualties per year was approximately 284, with a total of 37% of all civilian casualties occurring during this period. On average, there were approximately 140 Gendarmerie<sup>6</sup> casualties per year during the course of the conflict, however from 1993 to 2000 the average was approximately 333 casualties per year—roughly 60% of all Gendarmerie casualties. This increased death toll was mirrored on the side of the PKK, as roughly 60% of all PKK casualties occurred during this period, and the annual average rose to approximately 1,908 from a conflict average of approximately 789.

The PKK further violated their commitment to freedom and empowerment for their members in the way that it conducted its violent activity. According to research by Audrey Kurth Cronin (2003), PKK members who engaged in suicide bombing did not volunteer, but rather were forcibly coerced to use this tactic. The members who tried to escape after having been selected to serve as suicide bombers are reported to have been killed in front of other selected bombers, or turned in to the police (Cronin 2003).

Table 3: Total conflict casualties versus casualties from 1993 to 1999

	Estimated Casualties 1984-2012	Average Casualties/Year, 1984-2012	Estimated Casualties, 1993-1999	Average Casualties/Year, 1993-1999
Civilians	5,557	198	1,994	284
Gendarmerie	3,924	140	2,333	333
PKK	22,101	789	13,360	1,908

*Note: All data is based on the 2013 report by the Human Rights Research Commission, İnsan Haklarını İnceleme Komisyonu, of the Turkish Parliament. These are official estimates; however unofficial estimates differ, typically estimating much higher numbers of casualties. Yearly data were not included in the official report for other classes of actors affected by conflict.*



Nevertheless, these illegitimate actions provided distinct strategic benefits to the PKK. Following major damage to the organization during the Turkish military campaign in 1993, the PKK's shift to suicide bombing allowed it to continually maintain national and international attention to its efforts. The damage inflicted on the PKK between 1993 and 1995 had the potential to pull focus from a continued agenda of Kurdish rights in Turkey. However, the group's violent campaign kept the issue of Kurdish rights in the public eye, and as the group garnered more attention, it continued to present themselves to the public as committed to peace.

In 1998, as a result of military threats by Turkey against Syria, officials in Damascus began efforts to close the PKK's camps and force Öcalan out of the country. Following his ejection from Syria, Öcalan declared a ceasefire and fled first to Greek Cyprus, then to Greece, Russia, and Italy before his ultimate capture in Kenya (Zehni 2008:33). In 1999, following his capture in Nairobi and trial in Turkey, Öcalan was incarcerated in an island prison. Within months after his sentence, Öcalan issued a directive through his lawyers that the PKK should end their violent campaign and work towards gaining recognition for Kurds as an ethnic minority, moving forward with their political struggle. As he wrote after his capture, "A broad struggle for brotherhood and sisterhood, peace, and democracy must be the foundation of all activities inside and outside the country. We want a real peace and a real democracy in Turkey" (Öcalan 1999).

As Marcus (2007:286-305) noted, Öcalan did not ask the PKK to disband or disarm, as this would have cost him leverage with Turkey. From 2000 to 2004, the PKK did not pursue a violent agenda. However, since 2004 when the militant wing of the organization took control, their use of violence has resumed. The discourse employed during this time continues to emphasize the need for peace, but with a willingness to use violence. As Öcalan wrote, "In case

our efforts for a peaceful solution should fail or be sacrificed to the politics of the day...the present conflict will exacerbate and its outcome become unforeseeable” (Öcalan 2012:52).

In early January 2013, Prime Minister Erdoğan revealed that the Turkish government was engaging in talks with Abdullah Öcalan in an effort to end the conflict with the PKK and reach a negotiated peace. As Morris (2013) wrote, “In an acknowledgement that the latest escalation in a three-decade battle against the Kurdish insurgents was probably unwinnable, Yalcin Akdogan, a senior adviser to Mr. Erdoğan, said that the talks were aimed at persuading the PKK to disarm.” The initiation of these talks reveals the continued capacity of the PKK and its imprisoned leader to affect the resolution of the Kurdish question in Turkey.

## **Discussion**

The history and discourse of the PKK show that the group’s actions directly contributed to achieving two primary goals: survival, and the maintenance of its core agenda of expanding rights and recognition for Kurds in Turkey. In spite of repeated losses of legitimacy among key groups at various times, the PKK was nonetheless consistently viewed as legitimate by a set of audiences sufficient to maintain support and operations. When the group lost legitimacy among fellow Kurds as a result of their extreme violence in the mid 1980s, it retained the support of the DFPLP, a fellow Marxist revolutionary group. When the group lost internal legitimacy as a result of the widespread execution and torture of its members, it strengthened its core and continued to gather new recruits en masse as Kurds accused by the Turkish government of separatist activity were released from prisons.

This indicates that while legitimacy may be necessary for revolutionary groups, more sources of legitimacy can decrease dependence on any given audience, thereby mediating the otherwise negative consequences of illegitimacy. While the PKK’s violations of its identity-

based expectations cost the group support and resources, in most cases the violations also provided strategic benefits that helped to increase the group's profile or strengthen its base as the conflict evolved. Moreover, the historical evidence indicates that when the group did violate expectations, behaving in a way that conformed to its identity-based expectations would have imposed greater constraints or losses than those imposed by illegitimacy.

In spite of the fact that the PKK's identities as a group were repeatedly transgressed, the group was continually able to maintain its identity as advocates for Kurds in Turkey. Even when the PKK acted against other Kurds, they retained their position as the most prominent group committed to securing political and cultural rights and recognition for the Kurdish minority. By escalating the conflict in the Kurdish region of Turkey they raised the profile of their core agenda nationally in spite of damage to their legitimacy among potential constituents locally. After the damage inflicted on the group during Turkey's invasion of Northern Iraq in 1995, the group increased its support of Kurdish political parties. Nicole Watts (2006) has argued that an increased emphasis on pro-Kurdish political representation maintained the pro-Kurdish movement even as the PKK was weakened. She has gone on to note that "[Pro-Kurdish party leaders] were keenly aware that much of their electoral support base voted for the party because they saw it as a surrogate PKK" (Watts 2006:127). Through their diverse activities, the PKK maintained public attention for their issues, which directly contributed to their resilience and successes over time.

This raises the question of why a group would adopt multiple identities if it simply needs to maintain its identity as the prime representative of the ideological motivation for the conflict. As detailed above, the PKK was one of many groups that sought to lead the way for this broader movement. By adopting distinctive group identities, the PKK was able to distinguish itself within

the broader movement and gain supporters through its particular brand. Much like the nested levels of action discussed by Fligstein and McAdam (2011) in their theory of strategic action fields, the identities that the PKK claimed as a group were nested within the broader movement. From framing its revolution as the Kurdish People's Revolution, to framing its calls for peace in terms of ethnic rights, the PKK's discourse consistently reinforced the group's commitment to advocate for Kurdish rights in Turkey. As a result, even when there were conflicting expectations associated with the group's identities—for example, during the period that the PKK claimed to seek peace and democracy but still advocated for violent responses to Turkish actions—the group's prominence within the movement provided protection from the loss of support or resources that may have resulted from these contradictions.

The discursive history of the PKK also shows that the shifts in the dominant group identities corresponded with shifting conditions in the international political climate (e.g., Fligstein and McAdam 2012:99). This is illustrated by the transition from their identification with communist revolution to advocating for Kurdish rights through democracy. This shift coincided with two key events in 1989: the revolutionary wave in Eastern Europe and the election of Turgut Özal as Turkey's first president to succeed the military commander of the 1980 coup. These events marked the fall of many powerful communist regimes, and the return of a non-military government in Turkey (see Öktem 2011). In his 1990 report at the 4<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the PKK, Öcalan addressed the fall of the Soviet Union, and began the process of re-framing the group's identity. He stated:

“Approaches advocating the liberation of people, against the problems caused by capitalism... will replace approaches based on one system. The human rights of the individual, the democracy of society and the question of national liberation of

peoples will find a solution through scientific socialism... To confront capitalism with its heavy load of problems in this way is more valid than ever” (Öcalan 1992:40).

Throughout this speech, Öcalan highlighted the importance of communist ideals, but noted the shifting social conditions that demanded a reconfiguration of the PKK’s approach if it was to achieve the liberation of Kurdistan and rights for Kurdish people. While the abandonment of communism and pursuit of democratic solutions was a major shift in the identity of the PKK, it is evident that maintaining that identity and the associated expectations would have hindered the group’s core agenda and imposed unwanted constraints.

These findings offer valuable insights into the paradox that frames this study. While illegitimacy based on identities specific to the group cost them support and imposed temporary limitations, this research suggests that the long-term negative consequences of illegitimacy are only realized if the illegitimacy compromises the group’s base of material support or their ability to represent the broader goals of the movement. The case of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) provides a useful point of comparison to illustrate the consequences of abandoning the motivating social issues of the conflict. In 1983, the LTTE began a violent campaign against the Sri Lankan government in an effort to secure an independent state for the Tamil population. In their analysis of the LTTE, Bakker and associates (2012) noted that, while the LTTE engaged in egregious violence against the Sri Lankan government and Sri Lankan civilians, their initial efforts to gain support among the Tamil people relied on winning hearts and minds. While the LTTE maintained voluntary support for nearly two decades of conflict, by the early 2000s the LTTE “...broke numerous cease fires with the government of Sri Lanka and failed to negotiate in good faith for a solution that would give the Tamils much of what they had been fighting

for...” (Bakker, et al. 2012:49). According to Bakker and associates, the LTTE’s loss of legitimacy as a representative of the interests of the Tamil people ultimately devastated the group.

Turning attention to the legitimacy of a movement and a group’s legitimacy within that movement—rather than focusing solely on the legitimacy of a group as an independent entity—emphasizes the relativity and relationality of legitimacy in conflict processes. The ability of the PKK to retain legitimacy as a representative of the broader movement relied as much on the actions of the state as on the actions of the group. While the Turkish government lifted certain bans on the expression of Kurdish culture in the 1990s, the effects of these efforts were limited. Kurdish parliamentarians were nonetheless arrested for speaking Kurdish in public, and Kurdish political parties were repeatedly shut down. Some Turkish military officials have since argued that lifting the immunity of the Kurdish parliamentarians pushed members of the Kurdish population towards the PKK (see Somer 2005). Further, while the Turkish government has made efforts in the past decade to resolve contentions over Kurdish rights, these efforts have had limited success. Henri J. Barkey (2007) highlights persistent issues of economic underdevelopment in the Kurdish region of the country that have exacerbated tensions as the state’s efforts have been ineffective in ameliorating longstanding social inequality (see also Karaveli 2010). As a result, the broader movement has persisted, allowing the PKK to retain its relevance and power.

## **Conclusion**

Turning attention to multiple shifting sources of legitimacy offers new insights into the paradox of legitimacy and introduces a more nuanced approach to understanding the dynamics and effects of illegitimacy for revolutionary movements. While the PKK remains designated as a

terrorist group in Turkey, this analysis suggests how similarly situated groups might bridge the gap between illegitimate actions and ultimate political legitimacy. This research further highlights the importance of discourse for understanding the instantiation of identities and strategic action fields as organizations and movements vie for leverage through process of conflict and contention (Fligstein and McAdam 2011; White 2008). While continued research across additional cases and contexts is necessary to establish the generalizability of these findings, these findings are broadly suggestive and may offer insight into other areas of study, ranging from non-violent movements to the emergence of new commercial markets.

For example, research on organizational classification shows that there are penalties for illegitimate role performance in markets that are significantly mediated by product critics (Zuckerman 1999). Yet, with venture capitalism, social media, and crowd-sourced funding, the apparent constraints associated with meeting the expectations of existing classifications for legitimacy may be mitigated, as multiple audiences become increasingly relevant in determining the success of a product or idea on the market. Similarly, while the Tea Party movement in the United States has moved in and out of favor with establishment conservatives, their support from diverse, often contradictory audiences places them in a position to withstand low popularity, as detailed by Theda Skocpol (2013). Further, the Tea Party's stated opposition to the existing political system has directly contributed to their broader success.

In highlighting the potential impact of multiple audiences and the benefits of outsider status, these examples illustrate the potentially meaningful implications of this research for future analyses of legitimacy across diverse areas of study. However, beyond the broader applicability of this framework to other contexts, this research also supports turning analytic attention to illegitimacy as a distinct area of inquiry with far reaching implications (see also

Schoon in press; McWilliams 2011[1972]). From examining how illegitimacy impacts established institutions and states that are engaged in conflict, to the role of illegitimacy in shaping the dynamics of community formation and symbolic boundary construction (e.g., Dix 1984), continued research is necessary to better account for the distinct dynamics and effects of illegitimacy in conflict processes and beyond.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Cronin (2009) points out that success for violent non-state actors is highly complex and argues that definitions of success should include the achievement of process goals, strategic outcome goals, or survival. Further, success in the eyes of the group and its supporters can be as important as success in the eyes of outsiders, and measurements of success should include benefits for the population on whose behalf violence was putatively undertaken (Cronin 2009: 74-75).

<sup>2</sup> Official estimates on the size of the Kurdish population in Turkey vary, but range from 11% (Kirişci and Winrow 1997) to as much as 25% (Gunter 1997).

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that contention over the reduction of Islam's power was not limited to the Kurdish population, and impacted many other groups in Turkey.

<sup>4</sup> Multiple identities emerged through this research, each with varying levels of salience and varying evidence of associated support. Other identities that emerged through the coding process included identification as advocates for human rights, through which the group cultivated expectations of the pursuit of human rights and a commitment to individual freedoms; anti-colonial liberation front, with the associated expectations of establishing a separate state and overthrowing the Turkish government in the Kurdistan region; and intifada, which drew on the concept of a popular, non-militarized rebellion.



<sup>5</sup> The number of people displaced as a result of this conflict has been estimated at as many as 4.5 million. See: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/library/Europe/Turkey/pdf/Turkey-April-2004.pdf>. Retrieved July 14, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Gendarmerie are armed military law enforcement in Turkey.

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## APPENDIX C

### Networks of Legitimation and the Multiple Paths to Armed Conflict Recurrence

#### Abstract

Since the end of World War II, intrastate conflicts have outpaced interstate conflicts by five to one, and increasingly the majority of intrastate conflicts are recurrences. From 2000 to 2010 alone, 90% of all conflicts occurring worldwide were cases of recurrence. However, scholarship on the causes of conflict recurrence is characterized by contradictions. In this research I situate these contradictions within multiple pathways to conflict recurrence. Combining a novel approach to regression decomposition with statistical analysis and comparative research across 216 cases of intrastate conflict from 1946 to 2005, I show that the causes and dynamics of conflict recurrence follow four distinct causal pathways depending on whether the initial conflict ended with a government victory, rebel victory, peace agreement or ceasefire. Building on these findings, I engage recent literature emphasizing the role of legitimacy in affecting conflict recurrence and discuss how turning attention to the relational dynamics of legitimation and the networks of support in which conflicts are embedded allows us to better understand the effects of legitimacy/illegitimacy on recurrence in light of the prevailing social and structural conditions following the initial conflict.

Since the end of World War II, intrastate conflicts have become the most common form of armed conflict occurring worldwide, exceeding interstate conflicts by more than five to one (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 75). However, these conflicts are not evenly distributed across the nations of the world, and recurrences increasingly represent the majority of armed conflicts. According to the World Bank's 2011 *World Development Report*, while only 43% of conflicts were recurrences in the 1960s, that proportion has steadily increased. By the 1990s, 67% of all conflicts were recurrences, increasing to 90% in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (World Bank 2011).

Consistent with this trend, the past two decades have seen a proliferation of scholarship on the conditions and causes of armed conflict recurrence. Yet, this literature is characterized by contradictions. An extensive body of highly rigorous and well-conceived quantitative research has produced wholly divergent findings regarding the importance of key factors ranging from ethnicity (Kreutz 2010; Sambanis 2000; Walter 2004) to the outcome of the previous conflict (e.g., Flores and Nooruddin 2009; Fortna 2004; Kruetz 2010; Mukherjee 2006). As detailed below, not only have different factors been found as having a significant effect, but different studies have found opposite effects for the same key variables. In an effort to move beyond these contradictions, important qualitative research has advanced the argument that governmental legitimacy and inclusion are the most important condition for maintaining peace after conflict, yet key cases of recurrence contradict this assertion (Call 2012: 162).

In light of these disparities it is possible to conclude that one or more studies simply got it wrong; however, this article instead situates these divergent conclusions within distinct pathways to conflict recurrence. Combining statistical analysis and regression decomposition with comparative historical research to analyze data on 216 cases of intrastate conflict from 1946 to

2005, I show that the causes and dynamics of conflict recurrence follow four distinct pathways depending on how the initial conflict concluded. First, recurrences following rebel victories are represented by cases where the overthrown government retained a base of popular support that had been socially, economically or politically excluded by the new regime but retained the resources necessary for counter-mobilization. Second, recurrences following government victories are represented by cases following low intensity conflicts—the majority of which were failed coup attempts—that had sought total governmental overhaul and were followed by no meaningful reforms, thus retaining the perception of governmental illegitimacy without the deterrent effects typically associated with a determinative government victory (see Walter 2004: 374). Third, recurrences following peace agreements were initiated by splinter groups that were dissatisfied with the terms of the peace agreement or its outcome. Fourth, recurrences following ceasefires are represented by cases where the governments themselves re-initiated the conflict as they sought a determinative victory.

Building on these findings, I interrogate the role of legitimacy in shaping whether an intrastate conflict will repeat. Drawing on key cases of *non*-recurrence, I show that while legitimacy may be a sufficient condition to produce enduring peace, it is not a necessary condition and that government repression or “conditional tolerance” (e.g., Pakulski 1986) also result in non-recurrence. On the other hand, I argue that perceived illegitimacy of the ruling government is a necessary but insufficient condition for recurrence. I discuss how turning attention to the relational dynamics of illegitimacy (e.g., Schoon 2014, 2015) and the networks of support in which conflicts are embedded allows us to better understand the effects of legitimacy/illegitimacy on conflict recurrence in light of the prevailing social and structural conditions following the initial civil war.

I begin by reviewing the literature on conflict recurrence. After outlining the data and methods I present the results of a statistical analysis using conflict-year data for 216 conflicts. I then decompose the results of this analysis using an innovative approach that treats the projection matrix from the regression model as a network of profile similarity (see Breiger, et al. 2010; 2011). Following Melamed and colleagues (2012) I use a clustering algorithm to identify subsets of cases within this network of profile similarity. This leads to the identification of five clusters, each of which corresponds to one of five conflict outcomes: rebel victory, government victory, cease fire, peace agreement and ongoing low-level conflict. Comparative historical analysis of the cases of conflict recurrence within each cluster reveals four pathways to conflict recurrence and forms the basis for a broader discussion of the causes of conflict recurrence and the role of legitimacy and illegitimacy.

### **Causes and Conditions for Conflict Recurrence**

An impressive body of quantitative research has offered diverse and often divergent frameworks for understanding conflict recurrence. Across this scholarship multiple factors have been identified as affecting the likelihood of repeat conflicts, ranging from the size of the state's military force (e.g., Fortna 2004) to the political structure that is put in place following the resolution of an initial conflict (e.g., Hoddie and Hartzell 2005; Roeder and Rothschild 2005). In her overview of the literature on civil war recurrence, Walter (2004) argues that explanatory approaches typically fit within one of three broad frameworks: "(1) those that focus on why the original war began, (2) those that focus on how the original war was fought, and (3) those that focus on how the original war ended" (Walter 2004: 372).

Explanations that focus on why the original war began have largely emphasized the importance of ethnicity or the goals of the opposition movement, such as whether they seek total

overhaul of the governmental system or simply a change in regime. However, the observed effects of these conditions are at best inconsistent. While some have found that ethnic mobilization has a significant positive effect on the probability of civil war recurrence (Kreutz 2010), others have found that ethnic fractionalization has a significant negative effect (Call 2012; Sambanis 2000) and still others find no significant effect for ethnicity at all (Walter 2004). The effect of efforts towards a total takeover of a government system is similarly inconclusive, with results ranging from a significant positive effect on civil war recurrence (Kreutz 2010) to a non-significant negative effect (Walter 2004).

In another vein, explanations oriented towards how the original war was fought generally focus on the cost of the war. The duration of the war, number of battle deaths or number of displaced persons are used to measure the intensity of the conflict and combat weariness (e.g., Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Fortna 2004; Walter 2004). Yet, again there are major divergences in the observed effects of these conditions. Quinn, Mason and Gurses (2007) find that fatalities have a positive and significant effect on the probability of recurrence while duration has a significant negative effect. However, Walter (2004) finds no significant effect for battle deaths, and a significant negative effect for duration only when the subsequent war involves different actors than the first, while Kreutz (2010) finds the effects of both battle deaths and duration to be non-significant.

Explanations of civil war recurrence that emphasize the conditions associated with how the previous war concluded are similarly inconclusive. While some have argued that the partitioning of a state following conflict decreases the likelihood of conflict recurrence (e.g., Kaufman 1996), others have found that it has a positive effect (e.g., Walter 2004). Further, while some scholars have found that an outright military victory decreases the probability of recurrence

(Flores and Nooruddin 2009; Kruetz 2010; Mukherjee 2006), others have found no significant effect for military victory (e.g., Walter 2004) or find instead that a decisive rebel victory has a significant negative effect (Quinn, Mason and Gurses 2007). The effects of peace agreements are less divided, generally affirming that peace agreements decrease the probability of civil war recurrence, and the presence of peacekeepers has a significant negative effect (Fortna 2004; Kruetz 2010). Nevertheless, some find that the effect is statistically significant (Quinn, Mason Gurses 2007) while others find no significant effect (Flores and Nooruddin 2009; Kruetz 2010).

Beyond how the original war began, proceeded, or concluded, some have argued that instead we should turn attention to post-conflict social and economic conditions. Several authors have found that that infant mortality has a positive and significant effect on conflict recurrence (Quinn, Mason and Gurses 2007; Walter 2004), while higher levels of GDP per capita significantly decrease the probability of recurrence (Mukherjee 2006; Quinn, Mason and Gurses 2007). Similarly, multiple studies have found support for the assertion that larger militaries and longer periods of peace significantly decrease the probability of war recurrence. However, Kruetz (2010) finds no support for these conditions, with non-significant findings for the effects of infant mortality, GDP, and military size.

### *Legitimacy and Conflict Recurrence*

While there are points of agreement across this literature—such as how conflict duration or peace agreements affect the likelihood of recurrence—the results are at best inconsistent, with the studies that agree on *how* certain conditions affect the outcome generally disagreeing on whether the effects are significant. In an effort to address these shortcomings, other scholars have sought to engage in more nuanced historical analyses, moving beyond statistical modeling to examine the historical causes of key cases of recurrence (e.g., Call 2012; Stedman 1997). Most

notably, Call (2012) presents a highly insightful, theoretically motivated analysis of 15 key cases of civil war recurrence across Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Oceania. Using a comparative approach, Call develops the argument that “Political exclusion acts as a trigger for renewed armed conflict” (Call 2012: 4) and that governmental legitimacy—as fostered by political inclusion—is the most important determinant of non-recurrence.

The importance of legitimacy and political inclusion have been widely emphasized as central to shaping conflict processes (see Bakker, Raab and Milward 2012; Beck 2011; Hagen and Raymond-Richmond 2008; McFate and Jackson 2006; Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009). However, as Call (2012) himself acknowledges, a strict focus on legitimacy is limited in its ability to account for how the social, economic and material conditions highlighted by quantitative research mediate the effects of political exclusion. This is particularly important in light of recent research showing that different forms of political exclusion typically lead to different forms of conflict (Wimmer, et al. 2009) and that legitimacy (or illegitimacy) is conferred by multiple audiences, which allow its effects to be mediated by diverse social, material and economic conditions (Schoon 2015).

This limitation is conscientiously addressed by Call in discussing cases of recurrence that defy his argument. In his analysis of two cases where material factors played an evidently more important role than exclusion in motivating subsequent recurrences, Call (2012: 173-181) emphasizes the importance of external actors and economic motivations. Similarly, he highlights two cases where meaningful efforts were made to create inclusive governance but dissident factions from the original opposition renewed the conflict, concluding that these cases show the limits of his approach and highlight areas for continued research.



### *Sources of Contradiction*

The research reviewed here is highly influential work rooted in rigorous analyses. Further, many of these studies use similar (if not the same) measures for many of the key independent variables. So, how do we make sense of these contradictions? Where many of these studies diverge is in which conflicts are included in their analyses. For example, while Call (2012) focus on 15 core conflicts, Walter's (2004) research accounts for a total of 58 conflicts, Quinn, Mason and Gurses (2007) account for 124 and Kreutz (2010) accounts for 231. Further, while the majority of these studies rely on the minimum threshold of 1,000 total battle deaths for a conflict to be counted among the data (e.g., Walter 2004; Quinn et al. 2007)—the widely recognized threshold for a conflict to be counted as a civil war—others use 25 battle deaths as a minimum in an effort to account for political conflicts that may not rise to the level of civil war, but nevertheless had significant social and political implications (e.g., Kreutz 2010).

While each of these studies relies on different criteria for including a conflict in their data, because these data are measuring historical events of which there is temporally fixed population, we see a high degree of overlap between datasets. However, because the selection criteria for cases is driven by theoretical and methodological (e.g., missing data) considerations rather than efforts to establish a representative sample of conflicts, the majority of these studies are effectively analyzing the conditions for recurrence among subsets of the total population of armed conflicts.

Working from the assumption that each study highlighted above offers well-founded assessments of the conditions for recurrence, a logical point of departure for any effort aimed at making sense of the contradictions within this literature is to examine which cases fit with which findings, and interrogate the possibility that there are in fact multiple pathways to conflict

recurrence. Based on this review of the literature, it seems both analytically plausible and theoretically satisfying that the reason for such meaningful divergences in the findings across these studies is that each presents an important but necessarily partial picture of the conditions that shape conflict recurrence. This possibility motivates the methodological approach adopted in this paper.

## **Data**

In an effort to move beyond the limitations associated with analyzing only a subset of conflicts, I use the UCDP-PRIO criteria for determining when conflicts begin and end. These criteria specify that 1) the conflict must have occurred between organized groups, at least one of which was a state, 2) there must be a stated incompatibility, and 3) there must be a minimum threshold of 25 battle deaths in a single calendar year (see Gleditsch, et al. 2002; Kreutz 2010). These criteria are the least conservative of all major datasets and account for the largest number of intrastate conflicts throughout the world. By focusing on intrastate conflicts rather than limiting the analysis to events that rise to the level of civil war, these criteria necessarily encompass the broadest array of cases. Further, while most datasets use country-years as the unit of analysis, the UCDP-PRIO data measures conflict-years, thereby allowing for the inclusion of multiple distinct conflicts that may have occurred simultaneously in the same country. Each observation in the data represents a single year of a single conflict. As such, more conservatively defined datasets necessarily represent a subset of the UCDP-PRIO data.

The choice in data here is made exclusively to account for the largest population of cases for which data is available, as this is critical for the analyses presented herein which seek to identify distinct configurations of conflict recurrence. The UCDP-PRIO Armed Conflict dataset includes 231 conflicts between 1946 and 2005, 15 of which are excluded from these analyses due

to missing data. This results in a dataset of 216 discrete *cases* of conflict with a total of 2,489 conflict-years. It is important to note that for the statistical analysis each year of a conflict is counted as a single observation. However, as discussed in greater detail below, the subsequent historical analysis focuses on individual cases of conflict as the unit of analysis rather analyzing each conflict year individually.

### *Dependent Variable*

The dependent variable for the statistical analyses is a binary measure of conflict recurrence. I used Kreutz's (2010) coding for conflict recurrence which measures recurrence as being present (1) for each case of armed conflict that was followed by a subsequent conflict in the same country and absent (0) if the country did not experience a subsequent conflict (Kreutz 2010). This approach does not distinguish whether it was the same actors who were involved in the subsequent conflict, only whether or not there was a subsequent conflict. This is consistent with the majority of the extant literature (e.g., Call 2012: 50-67; Quinn, Mason and Gurses 2007). However, as detailed below, the historical analyses do distinguish which actors were involved in cases of recurrence. A total of 116 *cases* (~53%) were identified as having experienced a recurrence.

### *Independent Variables*

The independent variables for the regression analysis are representative of the conditions that have been found to have a significant effect on conflict recurrence, as detailed above. Data were drawn from the replication materials provided by Kreutz (2010) in his introduction to the UCDP Conflict Termination Data, and from Fearon and Laitin (2003). Kreutz's (2010) replication data adapts key measures from Walter (2004) and Quinn, Mason and Gurses (2007) for use in a conflict-year (rather than country-year) format, while Fearon and Laitin (2003)

provide country-level controls that have been observed to affect recurrence. These data account for four key categories of variables: why the conflict started, how the conflict ended, the cost of the conflict, and the post conflict conditions.

To account for why the conflict started, I include measures of whether the conflict involved ethnic mobilization and whether the rebels sought total control of the government (coded 0 if they sought anything less than a total government takeover). To examine the effects of conflict termination, I used Kreutz's (2010) original data on conflict outcomes, measuring rebel victory, government victory, ceasefire, peace agreement and ongoing low-level conflict. In addition to these conflict outcomes, I included binary measures of whether the conflict resulted in partition, and whether peacekeepers were deployed (see Kreutz 2010).

Measures of the cost of the conflict included the number of battle deaths (logged), the duration of the conflict (logged) and the size of each state's military as a percentage of the total population. Measures of the post-conflict conditions included the rate of infant mortality (lagged by one year), GDP per capita (lagged by one year), and each state's score on the Polity III democracy/autocracy scale (lagged).

In addition to these variables, I also included a series of controls that account for the attributes of the state and territory where each conflict occurred. To control for the effects of ethnic heterogeneity on the probability of recurrence, I include two distinct measures. The first is a measure of ethnolinguistic fractionalization (ELF), which measure of the likelihood that two randomly selected individuals in a given country come from different ethnolinguistic groups (Fearon and Laitin 2003). The second is Krain's (2005) measure of ethnic fractionalization, found in Kreutz's (2010) data. This measure calculates ethnic fractionalization based on the number of identifiable ethnic groups in a population and their relative share of the population

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable Name	Mean	SD	Range
<b>Dependent variable</b>			
Recurrence	0.47	0.21	0 to 1
<b>Independent variables</b>			
Gov. victory	0.47	0.50	0 to 1
Rebel victory	0.14	0.35	0 to 1
Peace agreement	0.09	0.28	0 to 1
Ceasefire	0.05	0.21	0 to 1
Partition	0.02	0.14	0 to 1
Peacekeepers	0.06	0.24	0 to 1
Ethnic mobilization	0.41	0.49	0 to 1
Total goals	0.58	0.49	0 to 1
Battle deaths (ln)	-0.17	2.47	-3.51 to 7.098
Duration (ln)	-0.24	1.75	-2.53 to 3.777
Military/capita	0.01	0.00	0 to 0.020
Infant mortality (lag)	76.51	45.81	5 to 304
GDP/capita (lag)	2701.37	3422.07	48 to 24,252.44
Democracy (lag)	-1.40	6.90	-10 to 10
Peace years	13.33	11.54	1 to 55
Year		13.18	1951 to 2001
% Mountainous	21.53	19.72	0 to 74.50
Oil exporter (1=yes)	0.28	0.45	0 to 1
Ethnic fractionalization	0.50	0.29	0.00412 to 0.90
Religious fractionalization	0.34	0.20	0.0198 to 0.77
ELF	0.51	0.25	0.01 to 0.88
N (conflict-years)	2,489		
N (Conflict episodes)	216		

(see Krain 1997). These measures are non-collinear and capture important but distinct features of ethnic divisions within a society. While the ELF measure captures the probability of interaction between ethnolinguistic subgroups, Krain's (1997) accounts for the fact that not all ethnic cleavages fall along linguistic divides (this is especially true in Latin America and Africa). In light of previous research showing that different forms of ethnic divisions in a society have divergent effects on conflict occurrence (Wimmer, et al. 2009), I include both measures. I also

included Fearon and Laitin's (2003) measure of religious fractionalization, which follows the same principle as the ELF but for religious communities.

Additionally, following Call's (2012) quantitative analyses which shows that oil exportation and proportion of a country that is mountainous have significant effects on civil war recurrence, I include Fearon and Laitin's (2003) measures of these two variables. Citing Fearon and Laitin (2003), who find that the number of civil wars per year have increased since World War II, Walter (2004) controls for the potential effect of this increase over time by including the year of each observation. While her findings are non-significant, this is an important control variable and thus warrants inclusion. Finally, I included the duration of peace, measured as the number of years between conflict episodes, as well as a cubic spline function on peace years to control for temporal dependence issues associated with binary time-series–cross-section data (see Beck, Katz and Tucker 1998). Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for these data.

## **Methods**

As outlined in the introduction, I combine statistical and comparative analysis to assess the causes of civil war recurrence. The statistical analysis was conducted in two stages. First, I analyzed the quantitative data using logistic regression. I followed the standard modeling approach in the literature on recurrence and peacebuilding (e.g., Call 2012; Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Kreutz 2010; Quinn, et al. 2007; Walter 2004) to remain consistent with extant research and provide a baseline for evaluating how previous theoretical assertions manifest in the data used for this analysis.

Following this analysis, I decompose the results of the logistic regression to identify meaningful subsets of cases. To do this, I used an innovative procedure developed by Breiger and colleagues (2011, 2012; Breiger and Melamed 2014; Melamed, Breiger and Schoon 2013)

that treats the projection matrix (also known as the hat matrix) of the regression equation as a network of profile similarity. In a standard regression equation where a matrix of independent variables ( $\mathbf{X}$ ) is regressed on an outcome vector ( $\mathbf{y}$ ), the hat matrix is multiplied by  $\mathbf{y}$  to determine the fitted or predicted values, typically represented as  $\hat{\mathbf{y}}$  (see Belsley, Kuh and Welsch 1980). The hat matrix is a square matrix of size  $N \times N$  in which each observation represents the degree of similarity between nodes  $i$  and  $j$ , net of the model specification.

Following Breiger and Pinson (forthcoming; see also Breiger and Melamed 2014; Melamed, et al. 2013), I extract the projection matrix for the original logistic analysis and use  $k$ -means clustering to partition the data. To determine the optimal number of clusters, I estimate nine  $k$ -means analyses ( $k = 2 - 10$ ), calculate the within cluster sums of squared errors for each set of clusters, plot the sums of squared errors as a scree plot, then select the number of clusters where there is an evident break or leveling in the plot (see Everitt and Hothorn 2006; Melamed, et al. 2013).<sup>1</sup>

After partitioning the data, I decomposed the regression coefficients of the logistic regression by cluster, calculating the contribution of each cluster to the overall coefficient (Breiger and Melamed 2014). This allowed me to evaluate and assess any between-cluster differences in the association between the independent variables and the outcome. In particular, this will offer important insights into whether partitioning the population of conflicts helps to explain the divergent findings in previous research.

### *Historical Analyses*

Following the quantitative analyses, I conducted historical research into the cases of civil war recurrence along with key cases of non-recurrence. This research is designed to identify whether there are substantively meaningful causal patterns within clusters. Because of the sheer

number of cases included in this analysis, the comparative research was conducted in two stages. I began by compiling case histories from compilations of historical overviews of modern conflicts including the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia (Uppsala Conflict Data Program), *Civil Wars of the World* (DeRouen and Heo 2007), and *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers* (Paul, Clarke and Grill 2010). For any cases where information was not available in these core reference texts, I compiled historical analyses and secondary literature on the conflicts.

Once I had compiled this initial data I used an iterative and inductive analytic approach that coded for key themes within each conflict, comparing across conflicts within clusters, then across clusters. I began by identifying the actors involved in the conflicts, the motivation for the conflicts, the conflict trajectories, and the features of the conflict recurrences, such as who re-initiated the conflict, why they initiated the conflict, and the social and economic conditions leading up to the conflict recurrence. As patterns emerged among the data, I purposively selected historical resources to more fully elucidate these patterns across all cases, continuing this process until I had found literature that allowed me to directly determine the degree to which each case fit the emerging patterns.

## **Statistical Analysis**

### *Logistic Regression*

Building on the quantitative scholarship reviewed above, I begin with a logistic regression analysis of conflict recurrence (table 2).<sup>2</sup> What is immediately striking is that, of the substantive variables, only government victory has statistical significance that exceeds the 0.05 level. At the 0.10 significance level, the presence of peacekeepers, ethnic mobilization, and an effort to fully overhaul the government (total goals) are also significant. In spite of its lower significance, the effects for peacekeepers is consistent with existing research which has, with



Table 2: Logistic Regression of Civil War Recurrence

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Estimates</i>	
Conflict outcomes		
Gov. victory	-1.442 (0.368)	***
Rebel victory	-0.610 (0.417)	
Peace agreement	0.086 (0.383)	
Ceasefire	-0.015 (0.369)	
Partition	-0.070 (0.827)	
Peacekeepers	-0.900 (0.519)	^
Conflict issues		
Ethnic mobilization	0.510 (0.279)	^
Total goals	0.520 (0.284)	^
Conflict Costs		
Battle deaths (ln)	0.014 (0.060)	
Duration (ln)	-0.065 (0.100)	
Military/capita	-2.093 (28.280)	
Post-conflict conditions		
Infant mortality (lag)	0.001 (0.003)	
GDP (lag)	0.000 (0.000)	
Democracy (lag)	-0.002 (0.019)	
Controls		
Peace years	0.125 (0.156)	
Year	0.015 (0.009)	
% Mountainous	0.003 (0.005)	
Oil exporter (1=yes)	0.283 (0.260)	
Ethnic fractionalization	0.713 (0.828)	
Religious fractionalization	0.146 (0.581)	
ELF	-0.433 (0.966)	
Spline (1)	0.013 (0.006)	*
Spline (2)	-0.008 (0.003)	*
Spline (3)	0.001 (0.001)	*
Constant	-32.801 (18.420)	^

N = 2,489

Log likelihood = -413.62

Wald chi2 (24 df) = 90.800

Prob>chi2 = 0.000

Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , ^  $p < 0.1$

reasonable consistency, found that peacekeepers have a negative effect on the probability of recurrence (Fortna 2004; Kreutz 2010; Quinn, et al. 2007). As discussed above, the effects of ethnic mobilization and total goals are less clear, but the findings of this analysis indicate that, net of all other variables across all 216 cases, these variables have a significant effect.

Given the size and inclusiveness of this data, it is unsurprising that there are few significant effects. Further, these results are largely consistent with previous analyses of recurrence using the UCDP-PRIO data as a foundation (see Kreutz 2010). However, perhaps more informative than the coefficients that are significant is the fact that, when controlling for the full range of conditions previously found to impact conflict recurrence across one of the most inclusive and comprehensive datasets on intra-state conflicts, there are very few conditions that have a significant effect on conflict recurrence.

Figure 1: Within Cluster Sums of Squared Errors for  $k = 2-9$

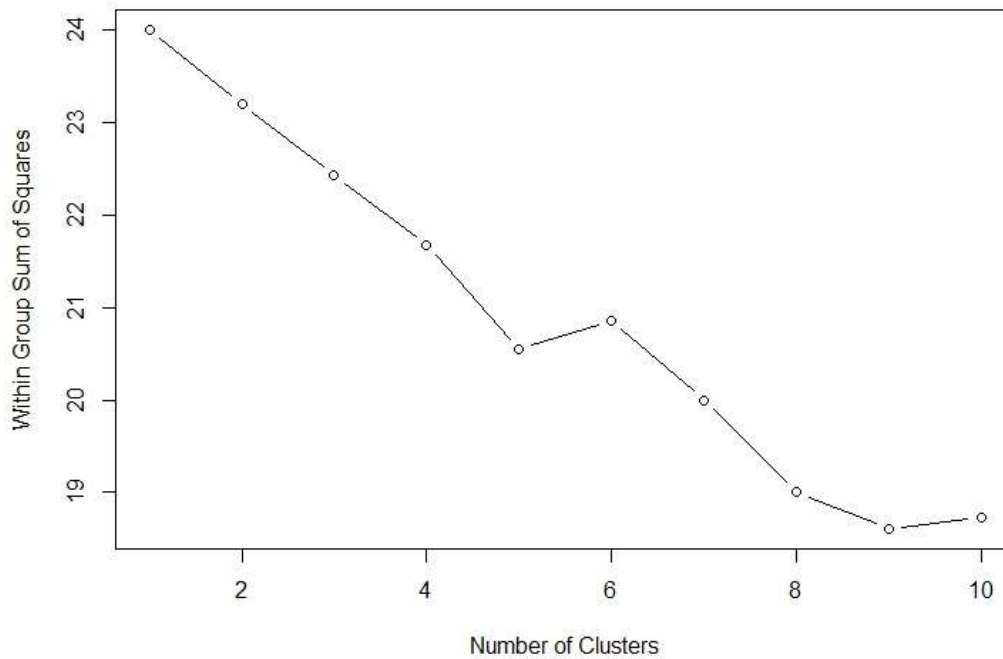


Table 3: Descriptive Statistics by Cluster

Variables	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster5
Gov. victory	0 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Rebel victory	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Peace agreement	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Ceasefire	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)
Partition	0.09 (0.29)	0 (0)	0.05 (0.22)	0 (0)	0.01 (0.08)
Peacekeepers	0.01 (0.12)	0 (0)	0.58 (0.49)	0.06 (0.23)	0.03 (0.16)
Ethnic mobilization	0.26 (0.44)	0.35 (0.48)	0.37 (0.48)	0.65 (0.48)	0.57 (0.49)
Total goals	0.81 (0.40)	0.66 (0.47)	0.77 (0.42)	0.35 (0.48)	0.30 (0.46)
Battle deaths (ln)	-0.65 (2.45)	-0.19 (2.60)	1.75 (2.07)	-0.54 (1.96)	-0.46 (2.12)
Duration (ln)	-1.60 (1.41)	-0.89 (1.53)	1.15 (1.47)	1.34 (1.43)	0.94 (1.08)
Military/capita	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)
Infant mortality (lag)	73.89 (43.86)	76.90 (47.90)	77.20 (42.53)	97.04 (40.62)	73.18 (44.01)
GDP/capita (lag)	1782.86 (1875.50)	2787.52 (3375.99)	1995.67 (1778.75)	1908.03 (3733.06)	3425.09 (4232.03)
Democracy (lag)	-1.38 (6.84)	-3.09 (6.50)	1.62 (5.94)	1.33 (7.20)	0.15 (7.04)
Peace years	13.69 (11.38)	16.89 (12.47)	8.81 (7.69)	9.13 (9.03)	8.99 (8.80)
Year	1980.09 (13.94)	1981.87 (13.39)	1985.37 (13.24)	1989.02 (10.91)	1987.19 (11.48)
% Mountainous	20.44 (21.98)	20.22 (18.44)	16.44 (16.41)	32.40 (28.60)	24.13 (18.64)
Oil exporter (1=yes)	0.25 (0.43)	0.39 (0.49)	0.05 (0.21)	0.07 (0.25)	0.23 (0.42)
Ethnic fractionalization	0.42 (0.30)	0.47 (0.31)	0.47 (0.31)	0.62 (0.24)	0.59 (0.22)
Religious fractionalization	0.37 (0.18)	0.34 (0.22)	0.38 (0.20)	0.30 (0.15)	0.33 (0.19)
ELF	0.47 (0.23)	0.48 (0.27)	0.54 (0.22)	0.63 (0.22)	0.55 (0.22)
N (Conflict-years)	350	1,163	212	120	644
Conflict episodes	27	58	26	20	85
Recurrences	15	20	14	11	56

Standard errors in parentheses. See table 1 for ranges.

### *Decomposing Logistic Regression Contributions*

As outlined above, the next step in this process is to partition the data based on the projection matrix (viz. the matrix of profile similarity). Figure 1 plots the within cluster sums of squared errors that result from partitioning the data into different numbers of clusters. As Everitt and Hothorn (2006: 327) discuss, there is not always an evident leveling typically associated with a scree plot when plotting the sums of squared errors for different  $k$ -means. As such, we look for “elbows” or breaks in the plot, the most evident of which is observed here in figure 1 at five clusters.

Partitioning the data based on their assignment into the five clusters identified using the  $k$ -means algorithm reveals that the  $k$ -means algorithm partitioned the data exactly by conflict outcome (table 3). All occurrences of each conflict outcome are limited to a single cluster, and each cluster excludes all but one conflict outcome. Because  $k$ -means completely partitions the data in a way that seeks to minimize the distance between each case and its corresponding cluster mean, we see that, net of all other variables included in the independent variable matrix, the most parsimonious partition falls along substantively meaningful divisions.

Table 4 presents a decomposition of the logistic regression coefficients by cluster. Each row in this table sums to the original logistic regression coefficient (included as the final column), while each column presents the contribution of each cluster to each corresponding coefficient. As Breiger and Melamed (2014) note, these contributions should *not* be interpreted as within-cluster logistic regression coefficients, rather they are descriptive indicators that reveal the direction and size of the association between each independent variable and the outcome (net of the other variables) within each cluster. Table 4 is truncated, omitting the splines as well as

Table 4: Decomposition of the Logistic Regression Coefficients by Cluster

	Rebel Victory	Gov. Victory	Peace	Ceasefire	Ongoing /Other	Logistic Regression Coefficients (row sums)
Partition	0.059	0.045	-0.336	0.020	0.142	-0.070
Peacekeepers	0.098	0.037	-0.790	-0.063	-0.181	-0.900
Ethnic mobilization	-0.030	0.230	0.089	0.022	0.198	0.510
Total goals	-0.027	0.292	0.028	0.005	0.222	0.520
Battle deaths (ln)	-0.005	0.005	0.006	0.006	0.002	0.014
Duration (ln)	0.010	-0.033	0.004	-0.017	-0.029	-0.065
Military/capita	8.875	-20.991	2.198	1.391	6.434	-2.093
Infant mortality (lag)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.001
GDP/capita (lag)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Democracy (lag)	-0.003	0.000	-0.001	0.001	0.001	-0.002
Peace years	0.057	0.135	-0.011	-0.005	-0.051	0.125
Year	0.001	0.001	0.002	0.001	0.010	0.015
% Mountainous	0.000	0.001	0.000	-0.001	0.002	0.003
Oil exporter (1=yes)	0.008	0.094	-0.024	0.015	0.189	0.283
Ethnic fractionalization	0.489	0.004	0.174	0.141	-0.094	0.713
Religious fractionalization	0.138	0.089	0.002	-0.019	-0.064	0.146
ELF	-0.376	0.047	-0.074	-0.021	-0.009	-0.433
Constant	-1.893	-1.575	-4.078	-2.697	-22.558	-32.801

*Note:* Because each cluster corresponds exclusively with a single conflict outcome, the decomposition of conflict outcomes was excluded.

the coefficients for the conflict outcomes because each cluster perfectly corresponds to a different conflict outcome.

What is immediately evident from this decomposition is that the effects of the independent variables vary widely by cluster. For example, while Kaufman (1996) argues that partition decreases the likelihood of recurrence and Walter (2004) finds that partition increases the likelihood of recurrence, here we see that in four of the five clusters there is a positive relationship between partition and conflict recurrence, but the association is negative in cases

where the initial conflict ended in a peace agreement. These findings appear consistent with both authors' arguments. Kaufman (1996: 160) writes that "the separation of groups is the key to ending ethnic civil wars." However, it makes intuitive sense that a partition which is mutually agreed to within the context of a peace agreement may be negatively associated with conflict recurrence. Nevertheless, consistent with Walter (2004), there is in fact a positive association between partition and recurrence across the majority of the armed conflicts, as we might expect based on her positive and significant findings.

Similarly, we see that the association between total goals and recurrence is negative in cases of rebel victory, but positive across all other clusters. Again, there is an intuitive logic here that in conflicts where rebel groups seek total overhaul of the government but instead lose or come to some mutual agreement with the government, they are more likely to re-initiate the conflict given that their efforts at regime change have gone unmet. This logic might help us to understand the divergence between the positive and significant effect observed by Kreutz (2010) and the negative, non-significant effect found by Walter (2004). However, it should be noted that this and all other variables do not operate in isolation and the true implications of these associations must be situated within the historical context of each case and the other conditions of the conflict.

While this decomposition will be further interrogated through the comparative historical research presented below, it is worth highlighting that only infant mortality, GDP and the control variable accounting for the year of each observation have consistent contributions across clusters to the overall regression coefficient. However, the observed effects for two of these three variables are effectively zero. As such, on a broadly descriptive level these findings support the

assertion that there are multiple, distinctive pathways to civil war recurrence. In the following section, I draw on historical data to elucidate these pathways.

### **Multiple Pathways to Recurrence**

As outlined above, analysis of the cases of recurrences within each cluster reveals distinct pathways to recurrence. Each of these pathways is conditioned by how the previous conflict ended. In the sections that follow, I outline and illustrate the general historical patterns that lead to recurrence following each distinct conflict outcome. While previous research has shown that certain outcomes can either increase or decrease the probability of recurrence, by looking at all cases of recurrence following each outcome, this research is able to advance a more robust understanding of *why* conflicts recur under different conditions, as opposed to focusing exclusively on the likelihood of recurrence.

#### *Rebel Victory*

Multiple studies have shown that a definitive victory decreases the probability of conflict recurrence (Fortna 2004; Flores and Nooruddin 2009; Kreutz 2010), and some scholars have found that rebel victories more decisively eliminate the conditions for recurrence than government victories (Quinn, Mason and Gurses 2007). As such, we might expect few cases of recurrence following rebel victory. However, within the data used for the quantitative analysis above, approximately 55% of the cases that ended in rebel victory (15 of 27 conflicts; table 5) experienced recurrence. Moreover, 14 of these 15 cases of recurrence involved the same actors or broad motivating issues.

A review of the historical literature on these 15 cases of conflict reveals that, with the exception of the Eritrea's war of independence (coded as a secessionist conflict), these cases of recurrence all sought to overhaul the government with a total replacement of power. Moreover,

Table 5: Rebel Victories Followed by Recurrence

Country	Opposition	Years
Argentina	Military faction led by Eduardo A. Lonardi Doucet	1955
Bolivia	Popular Revolutionary Movement	1946
Bolivia	Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR)	1952
Cambodia	Khmer Rouge/FUNK	1967-1975
Cuba	26th of July Movement	1956-1958
Ethiopia	Eritrean Liberation Front/Eritrean People's Liberation Front	1962-1991
Ghana	National Liberation Council	1966
Ghana	Military faction led by Jerry John Rawlings	1981
Iraq	National Council of Revolutionary Command and Military factions led by Brigadier General Arif	1963
Liberia	Military faction led by Samuel Doe	1980
Nicaragua	Sandinista National Liberation Front	1977-1979
Paraguay	Military faction led by Alfredo Stroessner	1954
Rwanda	Rwandan Patriotic Front	1990-1994
Syria	Military faction loyal to Nureddin Atassi and Youssef Zeayen	1966
Uganda	National Resistance Movement	1977-1979

the majority of the cases (11 of 15) resulted in the overthrow of a regime that enjoyed some degree of popular support and retained or gained the resource to counter-mobilize. This is illustrated by the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua that overthrew the Somoza regime in 1979. Following the conclusion of the Sandinista revolution, supporters of the ousted Somoza regime and the remnants of the military were living in exile in Honduras, Costa Rica and the United



States (Simon 2007). These supporters of the ousted regime would form the basis of the Contra rebels who, in 1980, reinitiated the conflict and sought to overthrow the Sandinista regime. As Simon (2007: 554) writes, “Initially, the Contras were composed of former members of Somoza’s National Guard who fled the country after the revolution...” These remnants of Somoza’s National Guard had both the grievances and motivation to renew the conflict and seek control. While they did not retain the resources to mount a meaningful opposition after their defeat, the United States supplied them with the weapons and resources to allow them to initiate a large-scale conflict in an effort to regain power (see Paul, Clarke and Grill 2010). As such, while they did not retain the capacity for counter-mobilization, they were a large enough force to effectively challenge the government and were able to gain the resources necessary to re-initiate the conflict.

Similarly, in the case of the Rwandan civil war, the Rwandan Patriotic Front—which was composed of exiled Tutsis—overthrew the Hutu-dominated government in 1994 (Asselin, St-Pierre and Carment 2007). However, the FDLR (Forces Democratiques de Liberation du Rwanda)—an ethnic Hutu movement—was able to organize armed resistance from the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, crossing into Rwanda and re-initiating the conflict (Uppsala Conflict Data Project 2015). In this case, long-standing ethnic divisions fueled ongoing tensions and virtually guaranteed that any new, ethnically aligned regime would face violent challenge by their deposed opposition.

As noted above, not all conflicts were re-started by the losers of the initial conflict, yet even those that were initiated by different actors nevertheless follow a similar general pattern. For example, in the conflict in Liberia, Samuel Doe led a coup that ousted the Americo-Liberian regime of William R. Tolbert. Politics in Liberia had long been shaped by divisions between the

Americo-Liberian's and the various indigenous ethnic groups (Wei 2007), with the Americo-Liberians retaining a monopoly on political power. These issues motivated the 1980 coup. However, following his rise to power, Doe increased the extent to which politics in Liberia were driven by ethnic divisions, concentrating much of the power in the government among members of the Krahn people (Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2015). Within just a few years conflict erupted as forces largely constituted by Gio and Mano peoples (two other major ethnic groups) sought to overthrow the government (Wei 2007). While the recurrences following the 1980 coup were not initiated by the government that had been overthrown, they were the result of the victors only enjoying partial support and maintaining a highly exclusive regime.

An examination of cases where rebels were victorious but their victory was not followed by recurrence further illustrates the pattern observed among the cases of recurrence. During the Ethiopian Civil War, the communist government had been held up by the USSR. However, after the 1989 revolutionary wave the Soviets stopped sending support and in 1991 rebel forces took the capital. The regime that was overthrown was weak and repressive, and had stayed in power largely due to external support that was subsequently withdrawn. Similarly, the 1948 conflict in Costa Rica was initiated when the seated government refused to relinquish control after losing in the popular election. The National Liberation Army staged a coup and ruled for eighteen months before holding new elections and turning over power to the victor. As each of these cases illustrate, the seated government that was overthrown did not simply lack resources, they lacked a meaningful base of supporters with the resources and motivation to counter the results of the revolution.

The results of the historical analyses also provide insights into the counter-intuitive results of the regression decomposition which show a positive association between the size of the

state's military and recurrence in cases where rebels were victorious. This association contradicts previous research that has shown that greater military size decreases the probability of recurrence. However, given the pattern among these cases whereby the deposed military mobilized against the new government following rebel victories, the meaning behind this contradictory association between military size and recurrence becomes clear. It should be noted that this does not mean that when larger militaries are defeated there will be a recurrence, but instead provides some substantive explanation for the fact that more than half of the cases of recurrence following a rebel victory have a military per capita that is greater than the overall mean.

#### *Government Victory*

While Quinn and colleagues (2007) have found that rebel victories have a significant effect on conflict recurrence, others have found support for the hypothesis that government victories are the most determinative (Kreutz 2010) and the statistical analysis presented in this paper broadly supports this assertion. The strong effect of government victories is further reinforced by the low proportion of cases (~35%; 20 out of 58) that were followed by renewed conflict. Walter (2004:374) discusses two key reasons that a decisive victory will decrease the probability of recurrence. The first is a deterrent effect. When one side wins a decisive victory, other potential challengers have more information about the strength, resolution and resources of the victor and may be less inclined to rebel as a result. The second reason is that victors are likely to consolidate power, which increases their strength relative to potential opposition movements. While Walter (2004) highlights these effects as being generalizable to any decisive victory, several key factors make them more relevant for understanding the effects of government victory. When a rebel group achieves a decisive victory, more work is required for consolidation.

Table 6: Recurrences Following Government Victories

Country	Opposition	Years
Argentina	Colorados Military Faction	1963
Burundi	Military faction loyal to Gervais Nyangoma	1965
China	Tibet	1950
Congo/Zai	Front for the National Liberation of the Congo	1977-1978
Cuba	26th of July Movement	1953
El Salvador	Military Factioned by Colonel Benjamin Mejia	1972
Ethiopia	Military forces of Mengistu Neway	1960
Guatemala	Military Faction (Small-scale Coup)	1949
Guinea	Operation Green Sea*	1970
Indonesia	Free Aceh Movement (GAM)	1990-1991
Iran	Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI)*	1949
Iraq	Free Officers Movement and forces of Colonel Abdul Wahab al-Shawaf	1958-1959
Myanmar	PNDF*	1949-1950
Paraguay	Opposition coalition between Febreristas, Liberals and Communists	1947
Sri Lanka	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)	1971
Sudan	Sudanese Communist Party	1971
Thailand	Naval Officers	1951
Togo	Togolese Movement for Democracy (MTD)	1986
Uganda	Military forces of Idi Amin/Kikosi Maalum Militia	1971-1972
Venezuela	Naval Faction	1962

\*See endnote 5

When a seated government is successful, they require less organization and fewer resources for consolidation because they have already been in power and are simply maintaining the previous regime.<sup>3</sup> Others have argued that an outright military victory reduces the likelihood of recurrence

because the “government can be confident that the former combatants are unable to reinitiate violent conflict” (Flores and Nooruddin 2009: 6). In conjunction, these arguments indicate that an outright military victory has a strong deterrent effect. While Quinn and colleagues (2007) argue that in fact it takes less for rebels to re-group after a military victory than for the military to regroup, this fails to account for the relatively greater costs for consolidation faced by an opposition movement as opposed to a long-standing government (e.g., Dix 1984).

With this in mind, how do we make sense of those cases where conflicts do recur after a decisive government victory? Across the 20 cases of decisive government victory that were followed by recurrence there is highly consistent pattern.<sup>4</sup> Each of those initial conflicts were short-lived and relatively low-intensity. The mean duration for all conflicts that ended in government victory is nearly three times the mean duration for government victories that resulted in recurrence, while the mean number of battle deaths for all conflicts that ended in government victory is nearly 17 times the mean for government victories that were followed by a recurrence. Of the 20 cases of conflict that experienced recurrence, 14 were attempted coups and all either sought secession or a total overhaul of the government, none of which were followed by meaningful reforms.

These conditions are well illustrated by the 1971 Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) insurrection in Sri Lanka and the 1947 civil war in Paraguay. In 1971 the communist JVP initiated a conflict aimed at overthrowing the government (Horowitz and Jayamaha 2007). The conflict lasted for less than three months, and the government was able to regain control over the area. While the estimated number of total casualties from the conflict ranges from 1,000 to 5,000, the fighting was not widespread or long lasting. Moreover, the conflict did not result in meaningful reforms. While the late 1970s introduced a brief period of political liberalism during

which the JVP entered legal politics, the party was banned in 1983 and had re-initiated armed conflict by 1987 (Horowitz and Jayamaha 2007).

Similarly, the 1947 civil war in Paraguay was initiated by a three-party coalition that challenged President Higinio Morinigo who had been in power since 1940. The conflict began as a failed coup attempt in 1946 and rose to the level of a small intra-state war in 1947 (Uppsala Conflict Data Project 2015). The war lasted for less than a year and Morinigo was able to retain control. However, Morinigo's dictatorial regime never had a high degree of popular support and the following year he was ousted by the republican Partido Colorado who had been his ally during the 1947 war.

As these cases illustrate, while the governments were able to retain control, their success was limited in scope and failed to introduce the deterrent effect typically associated with a decisive victory. Through these cases, we see that while government victories may provide more information to other potential rebels, signaling strength and capability (e.g., Walter 2004: 374), these effects appear to be mediated in cases where the government won but did not crush their opposition, or failed to consolidate power after their victory. This is particularly well illustrated by the civil war in Paraguay where it was a faction allied with the government who took control a mere year later. Further, the conclusions of these conflicts did not result in meaningful governmental reforms. As such, the original perception of governmental illegitimacy that motivated the initial conflict remained as a basis for continued fighting.

While not all recurrences were initiated by the same actors, we nevertheless see the same overarching pattern among those that did not. This is illustrated by the 1960 coup in Ethiopia. Motivated by the failure of government to provide for citizens, a regional governor and his brother, the head of the imperial body guards, took control of the Imperial Palace in Addis Ababa

while the Emperor was in Brazil on a state visit. In an effort to advance economic development and rectify inequality, the coup leaders sought complete political reform (Clapham 1968).

However, the coup was quickly crushed by loyal military. Clapham (1968) argues that while the coup occurred on quite a small scale, it should be understood as a true revolution because it set a foundation for subsequent challenges to the imperial rule and shaped the trajectory of the country.

The findings of the historical analysis are again consistent with the contributions of these cases to the overall regression coefficients. Within this set of cases, the most intractable conflicts (typically ethnic conflicts and those seeking total overhaul) are positively associated with recurrence, while (in contrast to the association observed in cases with rebel victories) duration is negatively associated with recurrence. Interestingly, as table 5 shows, a large military is negatively associated with recurrence, while the association is positive across all other cases. This may be an artifact of the data, insofar as the measure of military force is military personnel per capita, and a larger number of military personnel may indicate a greater integration of the military into society. This, in turn, might have the deterrent effect typically associated with a strong government victory, however there is insufficient historical data to empirically validate this claim and further research is necessary.

### *Peace Agreements*

While it is questionable whether peace agreements result in more enduring peace than a decisive military victory (see Kreutz 2010; Quinn, et al. 2007), like military victories, peace agreements have the capacity to usher in a stable, long-term end to conflict. As Fortna (2004: 273) notes, “Formal agreements entail a political commitment to peace that invokes audience costs, both internationally and domestically.” Further, the question of why peace fails stands at

Table 7: Recurrences Following Peace Agreements

Country	Opposition	Years
Djibouti	Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD)	1991-1994
India	Communist Party of India	1948-1951
India	Tripura National Volunteers	1978-1988
India	All Tripura Tiger Force	1992-1993
Iraq	Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)	1961-1970
Laos	Pathet Lao	1959-1961
Laos	Pathet Lao	1963-1973
Lebanon	Independent Nasserite Movement /Mourabitoun militia	1958
Liberia	National Patriotic Front of Liberia/Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia	1989-1995
Mali	Azawad People's Movement (MPA)	1990
Mexico	Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN)	1994
Niger	Air and Azawad Liberation Front (FLAA)	1992
Niger	Coordination of the Armed Resistance (CRA)	1994
Sudan	Anya Nya/Southern Sudan Liberation Movement	1963-1972

the crux of Call's (2012) manuscript. However, while Call focuses on a failure of peace following any cessation of conflict that lasts for more than a year, here I focus specifically on cases that ended with formal peace agreements.

As indicated in table 7, of the 26 conflicts that ended in peace agreements, 14 of those (~54%) were followed by conflict recurrences. 10 of those 14 cases were ethnic conflicts and 13 sought either secession or a total overhaul of the government. The only exception to this pattern is the conflict between the Mexican government and the Zapitistas, and while this was not



formally a secessionist conflict it was initiated in an effort to establish native sovereignty and exemplifies many of the core features of a secessionist movement.

A review of the historical details of these 14 cases reveals that 12 of these conflicts were renewed by splinter groups or extreme factions that were dissatisfied with the terms of the peace agreement or saw the resolution of the conflict in the absence of having achieved their goals as a failure. The only exceptions to this are the two conflict episodes (both a part of the same overarching conflict) between the Pathet Lao and the government of Laos, in which the central opposition group resumed hostilities and ultimately took control of the government. In all other cases, it was so-called spoilers (Stedman 1997) or veto-players (Cunningham 2006) that undermined the peace and renewed the conflict.

This pattern is well illustrated by the conflict between the government of Djibouti and the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD). Following its independence from France in 1977, Djibouti was ruled by a coalition government composed of the three major ethnic groups. However, within a few years the president had shifted to single party rule and the FRUD initiated a rebellion against the government in an effort to restore multi-party rule (Uppsala Conflict Data Program), with forces divided along ethnic lines. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Project, “When the FRUD signed the 1994 peace agreement the group fractionalized and one faction led by Ahmed Dini continued the armed struggle under the name FRUD (Dini faction), leading to a minor conflict in 1999” (Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2015).

The conflict in Liberia similarly illustrates this pattern. In 1993, nearly four years after the civil war broke out, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) brokered a peace agreement (Paul, et al. 2010). However, according to the United Nations Mission in

Liberia (UNMIL), military factions resumed fighting before the peace agreement could be implemented, preventing the conditions of the agreement from being met (United Nations Mission in Liberia 2015).

One anomalous case within this cluster is the first conflict episode between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Iraq, which lasted from 1961 to 1970. This war came to a temporary end when the Iraqi government issued the March Manifesto on Kurdish autonomy (Gunter 1996). According to Entessar (1984), this was the most far-reaching move towards addressing the issue of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq to that time. “Its major parts included the recognition of Kurdish as the official language in areas where a Kurdish majority was in existence, appointment of a Kurdish vice-president, self-rule, and the creation of national administrative units in the Kurdish region, and the constitutional recognition of the equality of the Kurdish nation in bi-national Iraq” (Entessar 1984: 918-19). However, issues surrounding the implementation of the agreement stalled the process. The KDP’s secretary, who had been selected by the Kurds to assume the role of vice president, was rejected by the Iraqi government because of his Iranian origin and the Kurds could not agree on an alternate candidate (see Entessar 1984). The process was further complicated by divisions among Kurdish tribes, not all of whom supported the approach advocated by the KDP. Backed by Iran, Israel and the United States, who sought to destabilize the Iraqi government by supporting the KDP, the Kurdish peshmergas re-initiated the conflict in 1971 (O’Leary 2002).

While this is not a standard case of fractionalization, we nevertheless see how internal divisions among the opposition played a central role in re-instigating the conflict. In this case the KDP was central to negotiating with the Iraqi government, but they were not perceived as representing all Kurds in the Kurdish autonomous region and from the time that conflict resumed

until 1975 when Barzani finally surrendered, his group fought not only the Iraqi government but also the members of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, a fellow Kurdish group (Gunter 1996).

Within this context, we see that while peace agreements may provide a degree of stability for conflict resolution, they do not guarantee the cooperation of all parties involved in the conflict. Moreover, they typically overlook the driving issues of identity that motivated the initial conflict and formed the basis of the opposition's belief that the government was illegitimate (Ghosn and Sciabarra 2015). These findings may help to explain the positive association between battle deaths and recurrence and duration and recurrence found in the regression decomposition. While previous research has emphasized the idea that increased battle deaths and longer duration are likely to decrease citizens' willingness to renew a conflict (Walter 2004), here we might understand these as signaling a higher degree of investment already made by the rebel forces, making them far more sensitive to the possibility of failure to achieve their total goals.

### *Ceasefire*

Research on conflict recurrence has understandably tended to overlook the effects of ceasefires, largely because ceasefires typically serve as a respite before resumed fighting or evolve into peace agreements which tend to be more stable forms of conflict resolution. However, many ceasefires last for years or effectively end a conflict, and their seeming instability is of particular interest for understanding why conflicts recur after showing signs of abating. Across the 216 cases of conflict included in this analysis, 20 resulted in ceasefire with only 11 coded as cases of recurrence.

The historical pattern among recurrences following ceasefires is perhaps the most surprising of any examined in this research. Of the 11 cases of recurrence, nine were initiated by the government themselves and not by the opposition. The two exceptions to this are the 1960

Table 8: Recurrences Following Ceasefires

Country	Opposition	Years
Republic of Congo	Ninjas (militia)	1993-1994
Croatia	Serbian Republic of Krajina and Serbian irregulars	(199
India	Naga National Council	1961-1968
India	Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah	1992-1997
Myanmar	Karen National Union, Karen National Unity Party	1948-1992
Nepal	Nepali Congress	1960-1962
Papua New Guinea	Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA)	1989-1990
Philippines	Communist Party of the Philippines	1969-1995
Philippines	Communist Party of the Philippines	1997
Russia	Republic of Chechnya (Ichkeria)	1994-1996
Senegal	Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance	1992-1993

Congress insurgency in Nepal, which was followed only by an unrelated intrastate conflict, and the ceasefire that ended the conflict between Naga rebels and India in 1968. The latter case was resumed by a splinter group of the original rebel organization, which is more consistent with the pattern following peace agreements. In all other cases, regardless of whether the ceasefire included some form of conflict regulation, it was the government that renewed the fighting and sought a determinative victory where one had seemed unlikely before.

This dynamic is illustrated well by the conflict between the government the government of Myanmar and the Karen National Union (KNU) that began in 1948. Since Myanmar's independence from the British in 1948 there has been persistent tension between the central government of Myanmar and the Karen people, which led to the formation of the KNU and the affiliated Karen National Liberation Army who sought independence from Myanmar. For more

than four decades the conflict continued until 1992 when the military declared a unilateral ceasefire. However, far from an effort towards reconciliation, Harriden (2002: 85) notes that “Military analysts suggested that, since declaring a unilateral ceasefire in April 1992, Burmese soldiers were simply waiting for an opportunity to strike when the Karens were weak.”

Capitalizing on religious divisions between Buddhist and Christian Karens in the KNU, the military gained the support of a Buddhist Karen splinter group who aided them in seizing the KNU’s base in the city of Manerplaw (Harriden 2002).

The conflict between the government of the Philippines and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) follow a similar trajectory. Beginning in 1969 the Communist Party of the Philippines initiated a protracted “Peoples War” in an effort to gain control of the government. While efforts at peace agreements failed in 1995, the two sides reached a ceasefire in 1997 which was quickly broken. According to a 2009 Armed Conflicts Report by Project Ploughshares, “After a short respite for peace talks, government forces were ordered to resume full hostilities against the communist rebels in April” (Project Ploughshares 2009).

These cases highlight the fact that governments are not always motivated to end conflicts peacefully, and may instead gain more by continuing the conflict in the hopes of a more decisive victory. Following from the arguments that partition may encourage copy-cat movements and that decisive victories provide information to other rebel groups that might be less inclined to start their own conflict (see Walter 2004), we see that governments seeking to bolster their own legitimacy might view a mutual settlement as a sign of illegitimacy and potential weakness and thus be willing to continue the conflict to avoid these repercussions. This is particularly relevant in light of the fact that the majority of the cases where ceasefires led to recurrence took place in states where the initial conflict began shortly after the state was formed or gained formal

independence. Under such circumstances, a long-standing ceasefire would undermine important efforts to consolidate the government and may have been perceived as introducing greater costs than continued war.

### *Ongoing Low-level Conflict*

The four outcomes discussed above provide evidence of cases where conflicts can reasonably be understood as having recurred. However, as one might expect, historical analyses of the cases coded as ending in ongoing low-level conflict reveals no real pattern beyond the fact that the previous conflict had no observable resolution and in most cases remained in contention. Across the 85 cases that experienced this outcome, it is clear that the conflicts did in fact die down, often for extended periods of time. However, because there was no observable conclusion, the conditions for the cases that are coded as recurrent remain effectively the same. As such, the path to recurrence for these cases appears no different than the conditions for ongoing war.

### **Discussion**

The analyses presented above reveal distinctive pathways to conflict recurrence, each of which is conditioned by how the previous conflict ended. While other research has emphasized (or not, as the case may be) the effect of previous conflict outcomes on the probability of recurrence, this research goes beyond probabilities by showing how prior conflicts materially and ideologically set the stage for subsequent wars. Armed conflict represents a challenge to the existing power dynamics, and the resolution of a conflict—whether through victory or agreement—provides a moment of clarity where actors can assess their new position within the extant social, economic and political structures. Each form of resolution reshapes those structures in meaningful ways, and as a result each one distinctively narrows the conditions for recurrence. In the case of rebel victories, we see recurrences following conflicts where the existing power

structures were upended and only those excluded actors who had the material resources to counter-mobilize were able to re-initiate the conflict. While government victories are typically observed as undermining the opposition and shifting the power dynamics more firmly in favor of the seated regime, we see here that recurrence only occurred in cases where the power dynamics (both ideologically and materially) stayed effectively the same. Peace agreements typically offer some degree of political inclusion for the opposition. However, they also signal that the balances of power are malleable, and for those groups where the cost of continued fighting is low or the previous investment in the conflict was high, they may see an opportunity for greater success through continued war. Moreover, in these cases there was virtually no evidence to suggest that the extreme groups that re-initiated the fighting sought political inclusion. Across almost every case, they appeared to view the government as fundamentally illegitimate and, rather than a struggle for increased power, they were fighting for total self-determination or independence. Conversely, the finding that governments almost exclusively reinitiated conflict after a ceasefire suggests that the potential costs associated with a power shift were greater than the cost of war. Here we see a pursuit of dominance rather than reconciliation.

The pathways associated with rebel or government victories most closely reflect the argument that political exclusion of the losing side will result in recurrence (e.g., Call 2012). However, as the discussion of the Contras in Nicaragua demonstrates, it was not merely exclusion but the provision of weapons and resources by the United States that allowed this conflict to recur. Conversely, there are multiple cases where the government won and experienced no recurrence of fighting in spite of conceding virtually nothing. Among those cases are the 1967 coup attempt in Bolivia, after which the country was ruled by military junta until the 1990s, and the 1957 rebellion in Oman, in which the government defeated the rebellion and

retained an absolute monarchy that severely repressed any opposition. This suggests that while exclusion may be necessary for conflict recurrence, it is by no means sufficient.

Given these findings, how do we make sense of the role of legitimacy and illegitimacy in shaping conflict recurrence? Call's (2012) assessment that political illegitimacy—as reflected by political exclusion—serves as a trigger for conflict recurrence provides an important foundation for examining this question. While Call draws attention to cases that run counter to his core argument and states that they reveal the limits of his framework, this self-assessment undervalues the importance of his contribution. I argue that these cases instead illustrate the relationality of illegitimacy and the complex networks that shape its effects. Recent research has advocated for a conceptualization of legitimacy that goes beyond the attributes of an entity and focuses instead on the relationships between those conferring legitimacy/illegitimacy and those receiving legitimacy/illegitimacy (Schoon 2015). Schoon (2015) argues that by doing this, we are better able to understand why illegitimacy is not necessarily as detrimental as legitimacy is beneficial, and evaluate the cumulative effects of multiple sources of legitimacy and illegitimacy.

Pushing this framework further, the research presented here suggests a way of understanding the effects of legitimacy and illegitimacy as embedded in a broader network of power dynamics. Armed conflict is often conceptualized in unitary or dyadic terms (e.g., conflict episodes or warring parties). However, here we see how a broader network of actors shapes both the capacity and willingness to engage in continued fighting. While a dyadic relationship of illegitimacy between the government and their opposition stands at the core of each conflict, the capacity of that relationship to foster conflict is mediated by each actor's connections to others. Take for example the conflict between the KDP and the Iraqi government. Following the March Manifesto in 1970, the KDP contested the Iraqi government's efforts to retain control over the



oil-rich city of Kirkuk. The Iraqi government argued that the Kurdish Autonomous region should only include those areas where the majority of the population was Kurdish, thus excluding Kirkuk, while the KDP argued that Kirkuk had always been a Kurdish city and should thus remain under Kurdish control. This perception that the government of Iraq was not a legitimate ruler of key areas of the Kurdish region fostered the conditions for renewed conflict, but it was the material support from Iran, Israel and the United States that allowed them to renew the conflict (Entasser 1984). However, external support to the KDP was motivated by border disputes between Iran and Iraq and once these were resolved the support disappeared, eliminating the KDP's capacity to continue fighting and leading to their surrender in 1975 (O'Leary 2002: 26).

Inverting this approach to consider the effects of legitimacy for maintaining peace we see the same relationality yet a much greater degree of complexity. Because armed conflict can effectively revolve around a single dyad of mutual (or even one sided) illegitimacy, the threshold for peace requires not only legitimacy but an *absence* of materially supported illegitimacy. Moreover, it is unclear whether legitimacy is even necessary so long as all parties view their positions within a stable system as advantageous enough to avoid the cost of war. Put another way, while someone may believe the government is illegitimate, this does not mean they are willing to fight. This argument is similarly reflected in Pakulski's (1986) concept of conditional tolerance. Challenging the then-contemporary view that, because effective administration could not rely on force alone totalitarian soviet states were considered popularly legitimate, Pakulski argued:

“...mass subordination in Soviet-type societies usually reflects ‘conditional tolerance’, i.e. it results not from the fact that ‘obedience is recognized as a duty’

or ‘persons exercising authority are lent prestige’, but from social perceptions of relative costs and benefits of (in)subordination.” (Pakulski 1986: 48).

This observation is illustrated by the case of Oman, mentioned above, whereby the monarchy did not necessarily maintain widespread support, but the relative costs of further conflicts outweighed the potential costs of compliance. It is also consistent with Walter’s (2004) highly compelling assertion that civil wars require popular mobilization and are therefore less likely to occur when the costs of previous wars are high.

The sufficiency (but non-necessity) of legitimacy for peace coupled with the necessity (but insufficiency) of illegitimacy for renewed conflict reflects the assertion that there is an asymmetry between legitimacy and illegitimacy (McWilliams [2011]1971; Schoon 2014). However, previous work in this area has focused only on the conditions leading to perceptions of legitimacy or illegitimacy. The research presented here goes further by showing that it is not only the conditions leading to perceptions of legitimacy and illegitimacy that are asymmetric, but the effects are as well.

While this research offers important insights into the dynamics of armed conflict recurrence, it also highlights multiple areas for continued research. Notably, while the empirical analyses presented above are suggestive of important insights for understanding *non*-recurrence, these arguments are built on a systematic analysis of cases of recurrence with limited analyses of cases of non-recurrence. More detailed historical research into cases of non-recurrence is required to empirically interrogate these arguments. Additionally, this work frames the dynamics of legitimacy in network terms but relies primarily on networks as a metaphor. Theoretical and technical apparatuses exist to move beyond the realm of metaphor and quantitatively examine the dynamics of legitimation networks, and future research would benefit significantly from

moving in this direction. Finally, while the cases included in each cluster of the analysis represent the full spectrum of time from 1945 to 2005, the nature of armed conflict has changed dramatically over the last half century and these changes have been all the more rapid over the last two and a half decades. While the purpose of this research is to account for the full spectrum of conflicts that have been influential in shaping contemporary scholarship on conflict recurrence, further research is necessary to more systematically examine the effects of time, and interrogate emerging dynamics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Conclusion**

By identifying multiple pathways to civil war recurrence, this research empirically situates the contradictions found across previous scholarship within a more nuanced framework for civil war recurrence. These distinctive pathways help to clarify the role of legitimacy and illegitimacy in shaping conflict recurrence and the maintenance of peace. They illustrate how conflict processes are embedded in broader networks of social and political activity that materially and ideologically mediate the effects of legitimacy and illegitimacy in shaping conflict processes. Moreover, by addressing how the outcome of an initial conflict re-shapes extant power dynamics, we see that these outcomes set the conditions for recurrence. Armed conflicts upend the networks in which relationships of legitimacy and illegitimacy are embedded, and while certain outcomes have a greater or lesser probability of producing recurrence, each outcome nevertheless narrows the conditions for recurrence in ways that are remarkably consistent.

## Endnotes

1. For technical details regarding the analysis of profile similarity, see Breiger, et al.(2011), Melamed, et al. (2012; 2013). For technical details on *k*-means clustering, see Everitt and Hothorn (2006). For technical details on the hat matrix, see Belsley, Kuh and Welsch (1980).
2. This approach to model specification does not prioritize one theoretical framework for conflict recurrence because a primary motivation is to examine the underlying cause of divergences between analyses that advocate for one framework over another. However, to test and examine whether the substantive results were driven by model specification, I ran a series of alternate models that prioritized theories each primary theoretical framework for explaining recurrence. I found that the variables in the final model that were significant at the 0.10 level in some cases increased to 0.05 significance in alternate models, but all variables that were non-significant in the comprehensive model remained non-significant in all alternate models. All other substantive findings were consistent with the comprehensive model, with the exception of the effects of peace agreements, which was slightly less likely to result in recurrence than ongoing/low-level conflict (the omitted group) when controlling only for the conflict goals and conflict costs. All results are available upon request.
3. I would like to thank Jessica Maves Braithwaite for this insight.
4. While this pattern was consistent across the majority of the cases of recurrence following government victory, three cases included in the quantitative data referred to conflicts where I was unable to find sufficient historical information to adequately analyze them. These include the conflict in Guinea in 1970, the Kachin conflict in Myanmar, and the Kurdish conflict in Iran. In the latter two cases I was able to find extensive information on the overall conflict, but not on the specific conflict episodes included in the data. While the detailed dynamics of these specific

episodes are not fully clear, I was satisfied that they do not undermine the pattern identified here. In the case in Guinea, the only conflict I was able to identify at for the year listed in the Kreutz's (2010) data was a coup attempt that was led by Portuguese forces in conjunction with local forces. These conflicts are marked with an asterisk in Table 6.

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