Spatiotemporal Variation in Armed Group Recruitment Among Former Members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam[1]

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Drawing from life history accounts of 30 former members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), this study analyses spatiotemporal variation in recruitment patterns. It demonstrates how shifts in the compositions of territorial control result in and intersect with changes in the recruitment strategies employed by the LTTE and the levels and forms of indiscriminate violence that respondents were exposed to. The results generate three space and time-specific recruitment trajectories that my interviewees followed to join the LTTE: political resentment, personal victimization, and military socialization. Paying attention to spatiotemporal shifts in recruitment patterns is imperative to better capture the differing recruitment logics operating at different stages of an armed conflict, as well as to improve scholarly understanding of why and how armed groups change their recruitment tactics.

INTRODUCTION

I was a student at that time, about to go to university and we all felt the standardization was a discriminatory policy, we thought that they are oppressing us because we are Tamils. Many of us lost the opportunity to study and also job opportunities. [. . .] And then the repression by the army started, they were simply arresting people and putting them into prison. We were so angry against the state, and we thought that we have to fight for our rights and that there is no other way (13).

I went together with friends. We were thinking that if we stayed in the village, we would die. The police or the navy, they will kill us, so better join the LTTE. [. . .] We approached the area person and told him that we wanted to come but he said: "no, you are too young, you do not yet have the right age." But we responded: "no, no if we stay in the village, they will come and kill us, we want to come." And then he accepted (4).

I lived in an LTTE-controlled area, so they could come to school to talk to children. They came and told us why they were fighting, the reason and the history and why the armed group was formed. [. . .] When I was 16, I joined because everyone in this area everyone saw the LTTE and that they were fighting for a good reason, and I thought that I should contribute (29).

These excerpts from life history interviews I conducted with former members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) indicate the extent to which their respective recruitment trajectories differed depending on when and where they joined the LTTE. While at the initial phase of the civil war, political grievances about discriminatory state policies and resentment regarding counterinsurgency measures

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played a central role in recruitment, in later stages, other logics based upon personal victimization through violence and social pressures exerted by armed groups and militarized networks were far more relevant for recruiting future militants. The quotes thus point to under-studied questions in the literature on armed group recruitment: to what extent is there spatiotemporal variation in recruitment patterns? How do time and context-specific conflict dynamics interact to shape the paths that individuals follow when joining armed groups?

Over the last two decades, research on civil wars has shifted from predominantly macro-level models toward micro-level approaches that aim to disaggregate civil wars in time and space, thus acknowledging the relevance of shifting conflict dynamics at the sub-national level for understanding different war phenomena (Kalyvas 2008; Wood 2008). In terms of membership in armed groups, a range of studies have demonstrated how variation in conflict dynamics at the micro-level results in various trajectories that individuals may follow when joining armed groups. In particular, scholars have theorized about how different power constellations at the local level shape recruitment patterns, thereby highlighting spatial variation in mobilization dynamics (Arjona 2016; Arjona and Kalyvas 2012; Charrad and Reith 2019; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Petersen 2001). Moreover, a few works have analyzed temporal shifts in recruitment logics, focusing in particular on changing recruitment strategies that are employed by armed groups (Alison 2003; Eck 2014; Richards 2014) as well as on temporal variation in opponent repression (Bosi and Della Porta 2012; Viterna 2006). While thus both spatial and temporal components have received some attention in the literature, there remains little research into the intersection of the two dimensions. The present article therefore aims to extend the literature on armed group recruitment by analyzing how spatial and temporal dynamics intersect to explain variation in recruitment trajectories. It argues that when—at which war phase—and where—in which war zone—individuals join an armed group has crucial implications on the paths they follow to militancy. More concretely, I focus on how changing compositions of territorial control result in and/ or intersect with shifts in the way(s) that armed groups recruit fighters and the level and form of violence individuals have to cope with to generate place and time-specific recruitment patterns.

I use the concept of trajectory or pathway rather than motivation to analyze recruitment processes, as they highlight the processual and multi-dimensional nature of recruitment (Horgan 2008; Torjesen 2013). As this analysis will show, recruitment can neither be reduced to a decision taken at one point in time nor can it be understood as shaped by a singular causal factor. Rather, it is a complex process that unfolds over time as a result of the dynamic interplay of individual motivations, organizational influences, and contextual factors (Bosi and Della Porta 2012).

My conclusions are based upon the analysis of rich data from in-depth narrative interviews with 30 former rank-and-file members of the LTTE. The data involves responses from interviewees who joined in different conflict phases as well as from different geographical areas and is thus particularly well-suited to explore spatiotemporal variation in recruitment paths. I qualitatively analyze respondents' narratives and demonstrate how the specific temporal and spatial mobilization context

configures three distinct recruitment trajectories that interviewees followed when joining the LTTE:

- *Path I—Political Resentment:* Respondents following the first path joined the LTTE during the early stages of the war when the government was still in control of the area, but the LTTE was mounting an increasingly successful guerilla struggle. Their recruitment was shaped by political grievances about discriminatory state policies, which became combined with indignation and anger about the government's brutal counter insurgency campaign to nurture polarization between communities and convince respondents that violence is a necessary and legitimate means through which they could defend "their community" against "the enemy." Due to the clandestine nature of the LTTE, respondents passed through a long and exclusive recruitment process during which they had to prove their trustworthiness and during which they also became increasingly integrated in a dense militant network, which further legitimized the option of violence.

- *Path II—Personal Victimization:* The second path became relevant once the conflict had escalated into large-scale violence. This generally mobilized respondents living in contested areas, where repeated militant clashes between militant actors had an immediate impact on their everyday lives. Interviewees were directly and personally affected by indiscriminate violence, including murdered relatives and friends and completely disrupted everyday routines. Joining the LTTE was therefore primarily motivated as a way through which they could escape personal victimization or take revenge for the loss they had experienced.

- *Path III—Military Socialization*: Those who followed the third path joined at a later stage of the conflict—after the LTTE had already gained control over significant territory in the north. These recruits generally joined from areas that were controlled by the LTTE. The LTTE used their unconstrained access to individuals living under their control to pull young people into the group, applying a mixture of persuasion and social pressure, and convincing respondents that fighting in the war was their moral duty and/or a means through which they could achieve social status. Narratives employed by LTTE recruiters resonated with respondents as repeated indiscriminate bombardments as well as the war experiences of family members confirmed the empirical credibility and emotional relevance of recruitment frames.

These paths are, of course, ideal types. There is always a certain level of variation in the logic of recruitment as well as within the identified patterns. Moreover, I am aware that my sample is far from representative, meaning it is impossible to claim that the paths just described cover all of the possible trajectories in an exhaustive way. However, I am confident that the similarities between paths of those joining at similar times and places and the differences with the trajectories of those joining at other points demonstrate that spatiotemporal conflict dynamics shape recruitment trajectories in distinct yet consistent ways.

Paying greater attention to how spatial and temporal factors intersect to produce specific recruitment paths generates several findings that are relevant for the existing literature on armed group recruitment and civil war dynamics, more generally. First, it indicates that different recruitment logics operate at different stages of a

given conflict. The large number of existing studies that seek to single out the dominant factor that explains recruitment might therefore capture only one recruitment logic operating at a specific time and place while neglecting others that are at play at other points in time or space. Moreover, by integrating spatial and temporal components, the present article highlights how notions of territorial control and recruitment strategies employed by armed groups intersect and influence each other. Whether armed groups control their own territory or not changes their military needs, as well as their opportunity structure for recruitment. It is thus likely that it also affects the recruitment strategies they employ. Further, the success of recruitment campaigns depends, at least in part, on armed groups' capacity to tailor specific narratives to the empirical reality of those living in a particular conflict zone. For this reason, scholars interested in shifts in recruitment strategies could benefit from integrating territorial control as a mechanism that affects armed groups' recruitment choices and constraints. Finally, studying spatiotemporal changes in recruitment can also inform research into internal dynamics of armed group organizations, such as competition between different factions (who were recruited at different stages of the conflict) or the functioning of socialization to create cohesive fighting units despite groups of recruits who have distinct motivations and experiences of the conflict.

SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL VARIATION IN ARMED GROUP RECRUITMENT

The question of why individuals join armed groups has figured prominently in the literature on civil wars. Since the 1990s, a significant number of studies have utilized cross-national comparative designs to assess why certain countries experience internal armed conflicts, while others do not (Kalyvas 2009; Wood 2008). While most of these studies investigate the onset of civil war as the outcome variable, they use recruitment as the central explanatory mechanism (Eck 2018). Depending upon their theoretical perspective, authors have proposed distinct hypothesis as to why significant numbers of individuals pick up arms and generally point to a range of factors, such as political grievances (Cederman et al. 2011; Goodwin 2001; Gurr 2016), poverty (Dixon 2009), greed (Collier 2004), rough terrain, and weak states (Fearon and Laitin 2003), just to name a few. Existing theoretical models thus offer distinct explanations as to why people resort to violence. However, most of these studies align in their explicit or implicit assumption that there is a singular paradigm or factor capable of explaining recruitment within a whole conflict area (Arjona and Kalyvas 2012; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Viterna 2006). In comparison, more recent works have shifted the focus toward in-depth analysis of conflict dynamics at the sub-national level, often based on intra-case comparisons of different local units. As regards membership in armed groups, authors have demonstrated that there exists significant local variation in terms of recruitment dynamics. Departing from Kalyva's proposition of different zones of control, a few works have analyzed how subnational variation in political orders shape local recruitment logics (Arjona and Kalyvas 2012; Kalyvas 2006; Kubota 2011; Lilja 2009). In the context of the

Colombian civil war, for instance, Arjona and Kalyvas (2012)—whose work was based upon original survey data regarding combatants' motivations to participate—demonstrate that recruitment numbers tend to be higher in areas that have been significantly affected by violence and in which armed groups had a strong presence, suggesting that local conflict environments have a significant effect on mobilization dynamics. This finding is reiterated by Humphreys and Weinstein's survey data about participants involved in the civil war in Sierra Leone, which shows how a variety of recruitment logics can manifest in a single civil war, as well as the time-specific and place-specific nature of recruitment dynamics (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008). Lilja (2009) argues that the geographical and social entrapment of individuals who live within zones controlled by an armed group enables the latter to use voluntary and/or semi-coercive tactics in order to mobilize constituent support, including recruitment, while rebels lack the structural opportunity for using "entrapment" as a tactic outside of this area and therefore have to resort to comparatively violent methods. Similarly, recent studies in the field of political violence—deriving concepts from social movement studies and contentious politics—have analyzed intracase variation in the trajectories that individuals follow on the path to militancy (Bosi and Della Porta 2012; Petersen 2001; Viterna 2006, 2013). Though they do not focus their analysis on spatial variation explicitly, these works highlight the relevance of different localities to better grasp distinct mobilization trajectories. For example, Viterna (2006) demonstrates that one group of women guerrillas in El Salvador—what she terms 'recruited guerrillas'—were all recruited by members of armed groups while they were living in refugee camps. The latter could thus be conceptualized as a specific recruitment area in which local power constellations influence recruitment patterns. Similarly, Petersen's (2001) work on rebellious movements in Eastern Europe identifies variations in the strength and the structure of local communities and demonstrates how these differences either generate or fail to generate mechanisms (i.e., status rewards, norms of reciprocity, collective threat attribution) that affect individuals' likelihood to join rebellious activities. In this way, then, these works show how recruitment trajectories are embedded in and shaped by local power constellations and dynamics of violence, and thereby highlight the need to pay greater attention to spatial variation when analyzing recruitment.

In addition to spatial shifts, certain authors also point out temporal differences in the trajectories that individuals follow when joining armed groups. For instance, Bosi and Della Porta (2012) demonstrate that recruitment trajectories of militants who became members of the Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Red Brigades differed depending upon whether they mobilized in a relatively early or later phase of the conflict (see also Viterna 2006). In the existing civil war literature, the temporal dimension of recruitment has been analyzed predominantly with regard to the type of mobilization strategies that armed groups have employed to recruit fighters. Several studies demonstrate how armed groups tend to use voluntary tactics at or near the onset of an armed conflict, but switch to more coercive methods once confronted with significant military or economic pressure (Blattman and Annan 2010; Eck 2014; Richards 2014). Other authors identify how rebel groups' organizational make-up and military strategy influence recruitment strategies. While clandestine guerrilla movements need a small group of highly competent and trusted

members (and thus tend to be very careful and selective in their admission procedure), armed groups engaged in more conventional warfare generally need a large number of human bodies and therefore resort to more inclusive (or even coercive) recruitment tactics (Eck 2014; Hegghammer 2013). Shifts in military strategies are thus likely to result in temporal changes in recruitment strategies, such as the expansion of admission opportunities for social groups who may be considered atypical or comparatively undesirable recruits (Alison 2003; de Silva et al. 2001).

Building upon these previous works, I do not merely want to provide further empirical evidence about spatial or temporal variation in recruitment, but aim to go a step further still by analyzing how the two components intersect. In fact, temporal and spatial dynamics interact in distinct and complex ways to generate recruitment patterns that are specific to both time and place. For example, whether armed groups control territory or not is relevant to the type of recruitment strategy they are able to employ (Kubota 2011). At the same time, the fact that they control their territory prompts armed groups to recruit more fighters in order to be able to defend their territory sufficiently (Wickramasinghe 2014). The formation of distinct power constellations across space thus relates to and interacts with temporal shifts in armed groups' military and recruitment strategies. The same is true for territorial control and violence: whether or not an armed group controls territory has an impact on their military strategy (Kalyvas 2006). Shifts in territorial control thus also result in and intersect with changes in the level and type of violence that is employed. As a result, analyzing these intersections is relevant, as they likely affect recruitment.

While spatial and temporal changes in conflict dynamics manifest in multiple ways, in the empirical section, I focus on three factors that figure prominently in the works on armed group recruitment that have been discussed and that are generally well entrenched in the existing civil war literature. Moreover, they also emerged as particularly consequential for shaping recruitment from my own empirical data. However, it is important to note that the explanation I offer is not causal in the usual sense of identifying the variables that lead to specific recruitment outcomes; they are, on the contrary, causal in the processual sense. I aim to analyze how my respondents came to join the LTTE and what factors affected their thinking and actions (Fujii 2008). The following factors proved particularly relevant in this regard: (1) the actors in control of the area where individuals lived, (2) the intensity and form of violence interviewees were exposed to, and (3) the LTTE's military and recruitment strategy. In terms of territorial control, I draw from Kalyvas' (2006) control-collaboration theory and distinguish between three conflict zones. In rebel-controlled zones, armed groups act as the primary ruling power (while state security forces are prevented from entering the area) and typical government functions are absent or provided/co-opted by rebels. By contrast, in government-controlled zones, the government continues to exert effective state power, and its troops are in full control of the region. Rebels, if present, are forced to operate clandestinely. Beyond these areas where one actor is in full control lie contested zones in which neither the government nor militant groups exercise full influence, but rather both parties hold some territory, and military and political influence changes rapidly. As has already been noted, I do not merely want to show how temporal and spatial variation in who controls a specific locality has a crucial influence on recruitment paths. Rather, I aim to analyze how

compositions of control relate to and interact with manifestations of violence and recruitment strategies in order to shape recruitment trajectories. In terms of violence, I concentrate on indiscriminate violence, which is widely acknowledged as a central driver of militant activism. In contrast to selective or targeted violence, forms of indiscriminate violence are targeted arbitrarily at individuals or groups independent of their specific action (Kalyvas 2006; Mason and Krane 1989). With regard to recruitment strategies, I go beyond the relatively broad distinction between voluntary and coercive tactics and analyze how the changing military needs and territorial constraints faced by the LTTE resulted in subtle changes in the type and scope of the tactics that were employed.

In the empirical section, I analyze how these three factors manifest and interact differently depending upon the particular time and place of recruitment, thereby constituting three distinct recruitment trajectories that my respondents followed.

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

The article draws from data collected during 3 months of field research in Sri Lanka from May to June 2018. I conducted 30 life history interviews with former rank and file members of the LTTE, exploring how they understood their membership in the LTTE and how they made sense of their militant activity. The interview structure was comprised of four sections connected with four main periods of the recruits' lives: (1) before joining the LTTE, (2) their path to militant activism, (3) experiences as members of the LTTE, and (4) life after the end of the war. The data for the empirical section of this article were mainly taken from the first and second part of the interviews.

I made use of a purposive sampling method to ensure to the extent possible that the sample of interviewees was diverse in terms of gender, phase, and geographic location of recruitment. The selection of sampling criteria was theory-driven, reflecting existing discussions in the field of civil war studies that point to these categories as particularly crucial in shaping combat experiences during and after war (Bosi and Della Porta 2012; Kalyvas 2006; Viterna 2013). At the same time, my sample is highly relevant to understand temporal and spatial variation in recruitment patterns. Of the 30 participants, 11 joined the LTTE during the first phase of the conflict (1983–1990), during which the LTTE controlled limited territory and fought a guerrilla war against the Sri Lankan government, while 19 mobilized at a later stage (1990–2004), when the LTTE had transformed itself into a de facto state that controlled considerable territory in Northeastern Sri Lanka. With regard to geographic location, my sample includes respondents from different districts[3] in Northeastern Sri Lanka, affected by the civil war: five respondents mobilized in Jaffna at the early stages of the war when the Sri Lankan government was still in control of the area but the LTTE was militarily advancing, expanding their influence in the district. Further, 13 interviewees joined from villages in Mullaitivu and Killinochchi, where control was either contested or—particularly at later stages of the war—fully controlled by

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[3] Districts are the second level administrative units in Sri Lanka that incorporate a number of towns and villages.

the LTTE. Finally,12 respondents mobilized in villages in Batticaloa, where control was contested between the government, the LTTE, and other militant groups. Additionally, about half of my respondents were women (13 out of 30).

Conducting qualitative research, particularly in a post-conflict context, necessarily confronts researchers with the challenge of gaining access to potential interview partners as well as establishing a necessary level of trust for interviews (Malthaner 2014; Wood 2006). I sought to mitigate these challenges by relying on individuals who were trusted by the ex-combatant community and who had the necessary knowledge about local security situations and village dynamics and were able to help me to get in contact with respondents (Dixit 2012). "Being connected" to someone who was known and trusted by interview partners helped considerably, as it made respondents feel comfortable enough to share their often painful conflict experiences with me (Malthaner 2014:180–181). Before the interviews, I always shared a meal or a coffee with respondents and chatted about my experiences in Sri Lanka, about Tamil food and culture, and I shared information about my family. These informal talks also helped to build trust and create a comfortable atmosphere for the interview. On average, interviews lasted for 90 minutes and were conducted in Tamil with the assistance of a translator. In an attempt to mitigate the loss of meaning that unavoidably results from the translation process, I chose the interpreter carefully based on the recommendation of a local research institute with experience facilitating international research projects. In fact, the interpreter's experience with academic research projects with vulnerable communities (in particular, with female ex-combatants) as well as her knowledge about the conflict proved highly valuable in creating an initial level of trust among interviewees and in contextualizing their narratives. For security reasons, all of the interviews took place at respondents' homes where they felt safest to openly talk about their experiences. Moreover, in the empirical section, I identify respondents' quotes only by numbers and refrain from mentioning the name of the village in which they live (d).

When analyzing qualitative interviews—in particular, people's accounts of past experiences—researchers have to deal with issues related to reliability, as interviewees are highly selective in the information they reveal and may even be self-serving, providing the opportunity for self-justification or for the promotion of particular narratives about the past (Auyero 1999; Della Porta 2014; Wood 2003). As a measure of addressing these challenges, I conducted interviews in the form of life histories rather than semi-structured interviews. The advantage of life histories is that they avoid "pushing" interviewees toward specific explanations, but instead give them the opportunity to develop their own narratives about how they experienced the conflict and enable them to focus on the factors they consider as relevant for their mobilization trajectories, while omitting others (Blee 2003). For example, while almost all my respondents had family members or close friends in the LTTE, only some of them mentioned these ties as relevant when talking about their decision to join the LTTE. Moreover, compared to senior members of armed groups, rank and file members generally have fewer incentives to provide ideologically driven answers and/or to self-censor in order to transmit a particular (authorized) narrative about the war (Bosi 2019), particularly if they are not politically active in the post-conflict context and have no ties to the previous leaders of armed groups (Viterna 2006). This

is the case with all of my interviewees. Furthermore, the aim of this article is to single out certain common experiences shared by groups of ex-combatants rather than to highlight the trajectories of the individual participants. The trustworthiness of narratives thus is dependent more on the shared meanings and interpretations contained within them than on the accuracy of historical events (Fujii 2008). Finally, to address the challenge of varying memories to the greatest extent possible, I conducted 15 expert interviews with local researchers, political activists, and NGO workers and used various additional sources to triangulate the information collected through the life histories, as well as to be able to contextualize the narratives and locate them within broader conflict dynamics. That said, the experiences my respondents shared, in the end, remain their stories and the way they look at their conflict histories after the civil war came to an end.

HOW SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXTS SHAPE MOBILIZATION PATHS: THE CASE OF THE LTTE

In the following section, I discuss the distinct paths to militancy found at different times and places during the Sri Lankan civil war. Each of these paths is comprised of different make-ups of territorial control that intersected with shifting dynamics of violence and shifting recruitment strategies employed by the LTTE, thereby capturing spatiotemporal variation in recruitment patterns.[4] On this basis, I classify three ideal typical paths, summarized in Table I.

Path I was dominant at a very early stage when the conflict became violent (in the early 1980s). At that time, the LTTE operated as a small clandestine group that fought an increasingly successful guerrilla campaign against the Sri Lankan government. Path II occurred after military violence had escalated and control over territory in the northeast of the country became more and more fragmented, resulting in highly contested military zones (from the late 1980s onwards). Path III came to be after the LTTE had established control over territory (from the early 1990s on) and parts of the LTTE community came to live under LTTE rule (from the early 1990s on). Following a brief synopsis of the Sri Lankan civil war, I discuss each path separately.

The LTTE's Struggle for Tamil Eelam

The political conflict between the two main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese (74%) and the largest minority group, the Tamils (18%), dates back to the time of Sri Lanka's independence from British colonial rule (Bloom 2003). Attempting to right the (perceived) colonial injustice, part of the Sinhalese elite adopted a series of policies and constitutional changes that increasingly reduced the Tamil population's access to education, land, and employment.

The militant mobilization among Tamil youths, which mainly began in the north in Jaffna in the 1970s and then spread to other parts of the Tamil-populated northeast, has to be understood as resulting from the frustration about the way the

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[4] Based on my empirical data, I could not identify a specific path for female LTTE recruits.

Table I. Ideal-Typical Variation In Recruitment Trajectories

	Path I Political resentment	Path II Personal victimization	Path IIII Military socialization
Territorial control	Government controlled area (increasingly contested)	Contested area	LTTE controlled area
Form of indiscriminate violence	Escalatory state counterinsurgency campaign	Repeated military clashes and attacks	Periods of stability and periods of heavy bombardments
Military strategy recruitment process	Guerilla war; clandestine, exclusive recruitment with probation period	Conventional war; presence armed group in area, little relevance of active recruitment	Conventional war; inclusive, open recruitment and socialization within militant networks

government limited their education and employment prospects (Brun 2008). Increasingly, large parts of the Tamil community judged the reform process as being anti-Tamil politics and evidence of a general 'Sinhalization' of the wider society (Thiranagama 2011). It was, however, in the 1980s after massive anti-Tamil riots in July 1983 that recruitment to and support for militant activism exploded, and what had been small scale militancy turned into a large-scale armed conflict. The LTTE, which began their guerrilla campaign as a small clandestine organization in the early 1970s, at this point evolved into a national liberation army with an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 cadres in the 1990s (Bloom 2003). Paralleling the LTTE's transformation into an institutionalized movement capable of controlling considerable territory, a remarkable geography of government and rebel-controlled territory emerged throughout Northeastern Sri Lanka (Klem 2012). From 1990 until the end of the war in 2008, the LTTE controlled substantial territory in the north, mainly in the Vanni.[5] It was there that their military and political leadership was concentrated and their grip on civilian life was known to be firmest (Klem 2012). By contrast, in the eastern part of Sri Lanka, territorial control was much more fragmented and remained contested over the course of the conflict. In many areas, the state security forces remained dominant, but the LTTE had a strong covert presence and influence. For the population living in these areas, this meant that levels of security and insecurity were constantly shifting as front lines moved back and forth (Fuglerud 1999).

The Sri Lankan civil war ended in 2008 after internal rivalry had considerably weakened the LTTE and shifted the power balance toward the government which, in 2007, was able to regain military control, resulting in the total defeat of the LTTE in May 2009 (Höglund 2005).

Path I—Political Resentment

The five respondents following this path were born in Jaffna in the 1960s or early 1970s, before the start of the civil war in 1983. They therefore experienced the

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[5] The Vanni covers the sparsely populated mainland area of northern Sri Lanka, including the Mannar, Mulaitivu, Vavuniya, and most of the Killinochchi districts.

gradual transformation and escalation of militant activism into large-scale armed confrontations in the 1980s, which considerably shaped their student days and their paths to militancy. At the time when they began to become interested in politics, the guerrilla campaign mounted by the LTTE as well as other militant groups constituted an increasing challenge to the Sri Lankan government. Though they operated clandestinely, militants successfully targeted police stations and army camps, thus questioning the level of the security forces' control over the Jaffna peninsula (Narayan Swamy 1994).

My respondents, who were in college in the early 1980s, remembered the period as a very intense time during which militant actions sparked fierce debates among students who, disenchanted about the lack of political commitment by Tamil parliamentarians to resist the perceived discrimination against the Tamil community, became increasingly supportive of militancy: "We discussed about the discrimination in school and there were all the posters and flyers the groups posted to the walls during the nights. They explained why we need Tamil Eelam and that we have to fight for it. We were boiling inside, and we also got on this track (11)." In particular, student associations and local coffee houses in Jaffna town became places where heated debates about discriminatory state policies and the need to fight for equal rights for Tamils led to an increasing politicization of students and resulted in local support networks for militants. Interest in the escalatory struggle was particularly high within student circles, as they felt personally affected by university-based reforms that had considerably reduced their opportunities to be admitted to the country's prestigious universities. This meant they were particularly receptive to militants' narratives (Brun 2008). In fact, the educational reforms had been a major force in mobilizing students from middle class, white collar backgrounds who constituted a large share of the early generation of militants (Sivakumar 1989).

However, despite their increasing interest in the armed struggle, respondents in the beginning remained skeptical about violence as a means of political struggle, and therefore did not yet think about participating themselves: "At that time, we were scared about them. These guys are with arms; will they shoot us? Will they take us with them? We had this kind of feeling in the initial stage" (11). Moreover, while they were somehow proud of their successful actions, in the early phase of the conflict Tamil civilians had limited confidence in the group's ability to confront the army and most youth were reluctant to join on these grounds.[6] This changed only gradually as a result of the increasingly brutal repression by the Sri Lankan government, which started a massive army counterinsurgency operation to curb Tamil militancy (Wickramasinghe 2014). Moreover, the outbreak of violence against Tamils in July 1983, which killed between 1,000 and 3,000 Tamils, resulted in up to 200,000 refugees,[7] and was overtly permitted by key government figures (Thiranagama 2011), constituted a "moral shock" for respondents and considerably shaped their perception of the struggle and their inclination toward future action (Jasper and Poulsen 1995).

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[6] Expert interview political activist, Jaffna, May 2018; see also Narayan Swamy (1994).
[7] Ibid.

> I had no relatives in Colombo who were affected by the riot but my neighbors and friends did. This is why, I went with them to wait for the train coming from Colombo. I saw how they checked if their relatives were among the dead bodies. In this moment I realized how the Sinhalese were treating Tamils. There were conflicts before, but I only heard about them, I was not affected myself. Only in 1983, I felt it myself. This is why, it hit me emotionally. This was the moment when I noticed I had to do something (25).

The riots worked to confirm respondents' perception that the government's repression strategy targeted not just the militants, but the whole Tamil community. This, in turn, heightened their sense of alienation from the state as well as the Sinhalese community more generally and increased their willingness to take action.

That said, during the 1980s, the LTTE, for fear of deception, was highly selective in whom they accepted as members.[8] Willing recruits had to undergo a probationary period during which they worked as helpers and had to perform small tasks, such as taking militants to safe houses or providing them with food and shelter. Doing so allowed them to prove their trustworthiness and resilience (Della Porta 1995):

> At that time, it was impossible to become a member of the Tigers immediately, we had to stay with our parents but secretly work for them for more than a year. They did this to check our trustworthiness and our discipline. We always had to meet members in temples, libraries or behind the school building in the evening. There they informed us on the tasks we had to fulfill. We needed to prove that we are worthy of being accepted (25).

Four of five respondents following this path worked as helpers for several years before they became full LTTE members. Through these activities, they came to know other young people involved and were thus increasingly drawn into a dense militant network. Only respondent 28 was allowed to join without any prior examination, as he was mobilized through personal networks, which constitutes an additional strategy to assess the trustworthiness of new recruits (Staniland 2014).[9] For those who worked as helpers for the LTTE, however, it was not clear from the beginning that they would join the movement as full time members at a later point. Rather, their path is best understood as a "slippery slope"—the slow progression of increased radicalization in which each step prepares and justifies the subsequent step (McCauley and Moskalenko 2011). Even though respondents felt a growing need to contribute to the struggle, they delayed the decision to become full-time militants over several years because they wanted to finish their studies or were worried about leaving their families. Only when the LTTE, strengthened thanks to a massive influx of recruits after the July riots, stepped up their military campaign and the Sri Lankan security forces responded with brutal counter attacks that led to a lethal tit for tat strategy in the late 1980s and early 1990s, did the respondents feel that the time had come for them to take up arms (Bloom 2003; Selvadurai and Smith 2013):

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[8] Expert interview religious leader, Jaffna, June 2018. Expert interview, local researcher, Batticaloa, July 2018. See also Narayan Swamy (1994); Bose (1994).

[9] At the early stage of the conflict, during the 1970s, the LTTE predominantely recruited through existing kinship and caste networks, as only personnel contacts guaranteed the trustworthiness of cadres. During the 80s, participation after an extended probation period was adopted as another strategy to test new recruit; however, recruitment through personal networks remained important. Expert interview political activist, Jaffna, July 2018.

> During the early stage there was not too much stress in the area where I was living but then the situation deteriorated more and more and I started to feel that this is the last resort, it was some kind of an inner feeling. The whole area was affected, the army was simply arresting and killing. Then I understood that now I had to fight that there was no other way (25).

The indiscriminate counterinsurgency campaign combined with the state-supported riots were therefore essential in increasing interviewees' willingness to act upon feelings of discrimination and to convince them that they should engage militarily in the struggle: "At that moment I thought, I heard about 1958, I experienced 1983 and now it happens again. I thought that we are all going to die, these fellows are just too bad. The situation got worse and worse, so I thought just let me join and fight for our rights" (11).[10]

Political resentment regarding the discriminatory state policies coupled with indignation about the brutal retaliation of the Sri Lankan security forces in order came to convince respondents who followed this path that violence was the only possible way they could create a better future for Tamils. As a result of the LTTE's exclusive recruitment policy at the beginning of the armed conflict, their recruitment trajectory constituted a lengthy and gradual process that involved sequentially increasing forms of militant engagement.

Path II—Personal Victimization

The 18 respondents who followed this path joined after the conflict had escalated into large-scale violence and control over territory in the northeast became increasingly fragmented and militarily contested. They joined the LTTE in order to escape an everyday life marked by violence, unpredictability, and loss or to avenge the death of loved ones.

Even though respondents lived in different parts of Sri Lanka (6 participated from villages in Killinochchi and Mullaitivu, while the other 12 joined from rural areas in Batticaloa), all of them mobilized during periods in which control over the areas where they lived was contested between the Sri Lankan Army, the LTTE, and other armed actors. They therefore had to navigate distinct, tough, and often overlapping, "orders of rule" (Korf et al. 2010:393). This fragmentation of authority not only deprived respondents of everyday stability and predictability but also left them with the often deadly dilemma of whom to serve, as reasonable behavior under the LTTE could be very dangerous under military rule:

> My father was a fisherman but then they gave him an electric treatment and after this shock he could not walk properly anymore, so he started the shop. And he knew to talk Sinhala as well. At that time there was a restriction not to bring products from the Sinhala area here but due to his knowledge of Sinhala he managed to bring more things. Then the army suspected that he is giving to LTTE but he did not. He did not give them anything. But as he brought more things they simply assumed that he is giving to LTTE. So they shot him (21).

Nordstrom has suggested the concept of "warscapes" to describe conflict zones where brutal repression, political volatility, and instability reign, and where "the certainty of uncertainty has become a fundamental reality in the lives of social actors"

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[10] The respondent refers to additional incidences of anti-Tamil riots in 1958.

(Lubkemann 2008). While war zones do not necessarily have to resemble warscapes, the concept aptly captures the everyday lived reality experienced by respondents who mobilized in contested areas. All of them report a constant fear of and repeated exposure to brutal violence: in the form of killings, round-ups, torture, rape, and displacement:

> When I was 12, I understood that there was a militant group and the army and that the army is always searching for the militant group. And that the army is mostly arresting those who are not LTTE. They harassed normal people, civilians not LTTE. I knew that most of the men from each house they run to the bush or the jungle, they hide themselves every day. And when men are running and hiding but they were shot by the army anyway, they would simply say they are LTTEer (20).

Respondents thus experienced their everyday realities as marked by permanent insecurity regarding what will happen next and in terms of how they could behave "in the right way." Moreover, for several female respondents, the fear of being raped by the military added another layer of insecurity to their everyday lives. The constant risk of violence disrupted daily routines, resulting in a pervading and avoidable sense of unpredictability, which, as Koloma Beck stresses, can be as devastating for individuals than the exposure to explicit violence (2012). Respondents often use the notion of a "loss of normality" to describe this sense of unpredictability and insecurity, which made them consider taking up arms as a means to cope with their frustration. Interviewee 27 aptly describes this feeling: "Even die while fighting is better than dying in their hands." Participation can thus be understood as the externalization of the powerlessness that respondents felt—as the only option to escape their victimization and to take back a certain level of control over their personal lives:

> We had no place to go. Our school was attacked. Many people were killed during the attack. During the rainy seasons we had no proper place to sleep, even we did not have money or material to protect our house from rainy weather. I thought people are dying everywhere. The territory is captured by the military. So, what is the point of being like this? (10)

For several respondents, the sense of losing control was aggravated due to economic hardship. Like most young people who joined the LTTE during the 1990s onwards, they lived in poor fishing and farming villages in rural parts of Northeastern Sri Lanka that were among the areas most severely affected by the civil war. Compared to children from more privileged backgrounds, respondents' families lacked the social and economic resources to remove them from affected areas to study in Colombo or abroad (Somasundaram 2002).[11] Instead, when facing displacement, or the death or injury of their fathers and brothers, or the destruction of livelihoods, their families struggled to sustain themselves. Respondents had to leave school—often the last site of normality—and take up certain activities for pay in order to earn extra money. Additionally, a few respondents reported family problems, often caused by alcoholism and domestic violence, as another motivating factor that prompted them to escape a life they "could not bear anymore:"

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[11] Many families who had the necessariy resources left the villages most severly affected by the war and moved to Batticaloa town or Colombo where they were relatively sheltered from violence or the left the country and moved to Europe or the US. Expert interview local researcher, Batticaloa, June 2018. See also Brun and Van Hear (2012).

> It was a terrifying time. I thought today I survived but what if they arrest me tomorrow then only I started to seriously think about joining LTTE. (...) And on the other hand, my father was a drinker he was always drunk and hit us and there was no proper food this also influenced me. I thought, I don't have to worry about the father, about food, about the army, I am free from all that. Better to go (20).

The participation of other respondents was more directly triggered by a definite violent event, typically the killing of a close relative by the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) and the related desire for revenge that the experience of loss evoked:

> I witnessed my father's dead body. Although he was wearing a sarong, I could see that his whole body was cut and people have seen how he was tortured alive, they cut and cut and cut him before killing. And when he was tortured, he was crying and saying I want to see her face, call Kita I want to see her face. They killed and tortured my father; I had to join and take revenge (19).

Unlike those who mobilized in LTTE controlled areas, recruitment campaigns organized by the LTTE and those who had ties to LTTE members played a limited role for participants following this path. While most had family members or close relatives in the LTTE, they did not mention these ties as relevant to their entrance into militancy. Moreover, these interviewees had no political aspirations, unlike respondents who followed the first path. They knew little about why exactly the LTTE was fighting, nor did they have concrete ideas or objectives about the desired outcome of the militant struggle. Several also report that they considered joining to constitute a small commitment and they expected they would be going home soon (Arjona and Kalyvas 2012). Neither relations to LTTE members nor their political ideology directly motivated their activism; however, the LTTE network was still highly relevant as it provided respondents with a place to go in order to escape governmental repression (Viterna 2006:25). Accordingly, the LTTE was perceived as a sort of salvation that protects them from violence and allows them to escape from everyday hardships:

> The military was so scary that we could not move we could not do anything, so it was good that there is someone who safeguards us and fights for us this gave the interest. Because I was so fed up to see what the military is doing and at that moment it was like the savior came. I was really excited (24).

> I thought about LTTE that they are our saviors that they are fighting to give us freedom and to prevent us from this torture (17).

The SLA's arbitrary and brutal repression thus worked in favor of the LTTE by turning protection into a selective incentive that the group could "sell" to young people who were trapped in everyday lives that they considered to be unbearable.

Respondents following this path thus mobilized in contested zones, where their unending exposure to brutal repression pushed them to join the LTTE as a means of escaping from personal victimization or revenging the loss of their loved ones.

Path III—Military Socialization

All seven respondents following this path to militancy grew up and mobilized in the Vanni at a later stage of the war—in the 1990s and early 2000s. At the time of

their recruitment, the Vanni was fully controlled by the LTTE. They were pulled into the movement by LTTE recruiters who capitalized on young people's need for recognition and status, as well as their admiration for LTTE's militaristic lifestyle.

Once the LTTE had shifted from guerilla strategy to more conventional approach to warfare in the early 1990s, their requirements in terms of recruiting tactics changed considerably. In particular, the growing need for foot soldiers to defend the frontlines made them accept young people almost regardless of their motivation and prior examination.[12] The Vanni was specifically affected by this change in strategy, as LTTE recruiters could use their control over territory to penetrate young people's everyday lives in a way that shaped their perception of the conflict as well as their individual role within the broader struggle.[13] In fact, repeated personal interactions with LTTE members figured prominently in most narratives, while more formal relations to LTTE's numerous political and administrative institutions, which encompassed the totality of public life in the Vanni, played a comparatively less relevant role for respondents' trajectories to militancy. One central reason for this finding is no doubt the relatively young age of interviewees at the time they joined the group; all of them were in their early teens and thus had limited contact to formal state institutions outside of school, which proved relevant for recruitment (see below). That said, LTTE's hegemonic position reinforced their powerful aura and their capacity to exert pressure over young people.

Respondents grew up knowing LTTE members personally from their early childhood. They lived "among them," as they would often describe it:

> The LTTE erected a training camp close to the place where I was living. [...] That is why, from my early childhood, I closely dealt with LTTE. We had lunch and breakfast with them because the school is close to their camp. So, when I was in grade 1,2, 3, 4 and 5 LTTE medicine was close to my school that is why, at 10am, we were going to the fence without that the teachers or the principal knew and then they asked us to come, because we were small children so they liked to take us. [...] We used to carry rifles, you know, we liked to touch and carry them. Then they shot the king coconut to break them; when they did that, it was fascinating for us (12).

Moreover, the LTTE organized large recruitment campaigns in schools and engaged young people into more informal talks in the streets in order to mobilize a sufficient number of fighters. The political socialization of respondents was thus dominated by a particular LTTE narrative that propagated and celebrated violence as the only mean through which to redress the suffering of Tamils and highlighted the crucial role of young people in the struggle: as "the 'bearers' of the future" (Marks 1996–1997:150; Thiranagama 2011):

> My school was in an LTTE controlled area, so they will come and talk to the children (...). They talked about the history, how the Sinhala government treated us (...). They said, we don't have rights, we don't have a land, we are a minority, whatever we say in parliament is not taken seriously, so we have to fight and get our own country. It should be reached by you, then we can have a good life. If you sacrifice your life the future generation will have a good education and a good life. When they deliver a speech, it will really motivate us (8).

While forced recruitment was quite rare in the Vanni before the last final of the war, LTTE recruiters were quite skillful in putting significant pressure on potential

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[12] Expert interview religious leader, Killinochchi, June 2018.
[13] Similar dynamics seem to have occurred in the pockets the LTTE controlled in the east.

participants and luring even unwilling young people into the movement.[14] When asking about the LTTE's recruitment strategies, a senior LTTE member explained recruiters' persuasion tactic in the following way:

> There was a team assigned for recruiting people, they will wait in these junctions (. . .) then they will stop them and start to talk, talk, talk, and they will convince them to join. I mean if you are a strong personality you would say no, I will not join, leave me alone but our boys and girls here, they do not have this kind of personality. If LTTE recruiters stand next to them and pressure them, many will go.[15]

The incentive structure for participating is thus quite different in a conflict zone where an armed group has become the dominant leading force of a community and all social and political organizations that could have offered non-militant activities and live prospects to youngsters had been destroyed or co-opted by the LTTE. (Thiranagama 2011). This was particularly true for respondents whose most intimate circles, such as their families or close friends, were also involved in the LTTE and therefore faced an even greater amount of normative pressure to contribute what they could:

> When I did O level, when I was 16, my aunt, my mother's sister she was a captain in LTTE and she died. And the uncle, he also was a commander, but then he was sent abroad. And one of my best friends he joined. All were there. I did my O level and I was studying bioscience in advanced level but I felt I need to do something I cannot study anymore. That time in April, I decided to join with LTTE (12).

In addition to the social and moral pressure exerted on young people, the LTTE also attracted recruits through their militant lifestyle. Living in LTTE-controlled territory meant that respondents were almost always surrounded by LTTE cadres carrying arms and wearing uniforms as well as exposed to LTTE rituals and symbols, evoking admiration, excitement, and curiosity. As Thiranagama has pointed out, the military culture, best exemplified in the LTTE's symbolism of heroism and sacrifice, created a new route to status and power for young people in the country and, in particular, for those from lower socioeconomic background with limited resources to succeed in society (Thiranagama 2011).[16] Similar to the respondents who joined from contested areas, interviewees who were recruited in LTTE-controlled zones were predominantly from socioeconomically disadvantaged families and therefore were possibly more receptive to narratives about the heroic nature of militancy.[17] Moreover, their young age—they were between 12 and 17 years of age at the time of recruitment—certainly made them more susceptible to adventure stories and the public display of war paraphernalia (de Silva et al. 2001). Respondent 7 describes how her excitement about the LTTE's militant lifestyle combined with the level of respect that LTTE members had in the local community motivated her to join:

[14] There is evidence that forced recruitment occurred earlier on in the East, where regional commanders tried to increase their popularity through the (coerced) mobilization of large amount of youngsters. Expert interview, political activist, Batticaloa, July 2018.

[15] Interview senior LTTE member, Jaffna, July 2018.

[16] Research shows that militant activism is particualrly appealing to young men from disadvantaged family backgrounds and socio-economic status who have few opportunities available to them in society (McCauley and Moskalenko 2011:70).

[17] Expert interview, political activist, Jaffna, July 2018.

They had very nice uniforms and arms and everyone admired them when they were walking along the streets. There is a lot of respect in the community. You could see it in the body language of people. At that time, I was fascinated by that. And I liked to wear the LTTE uniform of my brother. Then, one day, some big LTTE persons were coming and told me, you come and join us then you can wear this uniform, so I went with them.

In contrast to respondents who joined in contested areas, militant clashes between warring factions played a limited role for respondents who joined in LTTE-controlled zones. This, however, does not mean that indiscriminate violence had no impact, but rather that it simply manifested differently. Except for the ceasefire periods, LTTE-controlled villages in the Vanni were repeatedly subject to heavy state bombardment campaigns that brought about severe human suffering. While none of my respondents reported that they had been personally injured by the shelling, witnessing the hardship caused by state repression provoked resentment and lent credibility to LTTE's recruitment narratives that included detailed accounts of atrocities against Tamil civilians. Witnessing the deaths of civilians and being exposed to recruiters' demands to take action against these injustices proved highly effective as an argument to convince respondents that fighting is a necessary response.

What unites interviewees following this path is the fact that all of them had been socialized into a militarized environment that was dominated by the LTTE. The routine, almost constant exposure to LTTE narratives, recruitment attempts, and the group's lifestyle combined with state-led indiscriminate bombardment missions were crucial in shaping their thinking about their role in society and in evoking pressure and excitement about participating in the fight.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article aimed to contribute to the literature on recruitment during civil wars by directing scholarly attention to how spatial and temporal dynamics intersect to generate distinct recruitment patterns. The empirical analysis has demonstrated that spatial and temporal shifts in territorial control interacted with changes in the LTTE's military and recruitment strategies, as well as with differences in the type and degree of indiscriminate violence, to generate time-specific and place-specific recruitment trajectories that my respondents followed to join the LTTE. In particular, my findings highlight that an exclusive focus on variation in territorial control would be insufficient in explaining the specificity of the identified recruitment patterns. Rather, LTTE's increased leverage over significant territory interacted with shifts in their military strategies and recruitment needs—in that fighting a conventional war requires a large amount of foot soldiers—as well as with changes in the recruitment strategy the LTTE was able to employ—due to territorial control, the LTTE had free access to local populations to generate political socialization as a distinct recruitment path. Similarly, concentrating on the control component could not fully explain the specificity of the personal victimization path; instead, shifts in control intersected with the LTTE's increased capacity to challenge the Sri Lankan army militarily, which resulted in the ubiquity of violence in contented areas, as well as with a more inclusive recruitment strategy that generated this unique trajectory. The

three pathways are thus best understood as conditioned by shifts in territorial control and concomitant changes in recruitment strategies and manifestations of violence.

My findings on spatiotemporal variation in recruitment also inform existing studies on membership in armed groups by showing that distinct recruitment logics and theoretical approaches are relevant at varying stages of a given conflict. While at the beginning of the war political grievances and resentment about brutal counterinsurgency measures mattered for mobilization, at later stages after the conflict had escalated into large-scale violence and the LTTE had established control over certain areas, other logics focusing on victimization through violence and social pressure exerted by armed groups and militarized networks were far more relevant in generating sustained militancy. Future studies could thus benefit from exploring more systematically how conflict dynamics endogenously shape recruitment logics and whether similar spatiotemporal changes in patterns can be observed in other conflicts.

While singling out variation in recruitment trajectories is crucial to enhance scholarly understanding of recruitment and recruitment tactics during civil wars, it would be misleading to ascribe the same relevance to all the identified pathways. As the empirical analysis has shown, most of my respondents followed the second path to militancy. This may simply be the result of the sampling strategy employed, which was purposive rather than representative, and thus might have resulted in the overrepresentation of a certain type of recruit. However, when comparing my results with the findings from other studies on mobilization during the Sri Lankan civil war, it seems possible that the second path is indeed the most relevant one in terms of the numbers of recruits that followed this trajectory. Indeed, while there is no representative data on the population of former members of the LTTE, other qualitative studies as well as several of my own expert interviews indicate that most LTTE recruits were drawn from the lower-middle class and the laboring poor living in the farming and fishing villages of the Eastern Province and the Northern Vanni (Bose 1994; de Silva et al. 2001; Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1994).[18] However, contrary to the "greed hypothesis" that postulates that poor people have more to gain from violence than from peace and thus join rebellions for material gain (Collier 2004), none of my respondents participated for money or loot; rather, they came from areas in which exposure to violence was high and where people generally lacked the resources and networks to cope with repression. They therefore considered joining as a means through which to escape distinct forms of victimization. While my findings thus suggest that the combination of poverty with high levels of repression is particularly consequential for recruitment during armed conflicts (for similar conclusions for the Colombian case (see Arjona and Kalyvas 2012), a recent study on Nepal's civil war (Eck 2018) has questioned the relation between subnational poverty and recruitment, demonstrating that the most advantaged social groups were overrepresented among rebels. Future research is thus needed to more systematically assess under

[18] Expert interview local researcher, Batticaloa, June 2018; Expert interview political activist, Batticaloa, June 2018. Expert interview religious leader, Jaffna, June 2018.

what conditions (the type of civil war, the stage and location within an armed conflict, the ideology of armed groups, etc.) which recruitment logic is most common.

Beyond understanding recruitment, focusing on spatiotemporal variation in conflict dynamics can help illuminate other aspects of political violence and open up avenues for further research. To start with, this analytical lens may help scholars to analyze how and why recruitment strategies armed groups employ vary in terms of time and space. To date, the literature has concentrated on explaining large shifts from voluntary to coercive strategies, while less attention has been devoted to subtler shifts in recruitment tactics such as the recruitment campaigns and narratives employed by rebels. My data suggest that armed groups are quite skillful in adapting their recruitment narratives to the specific spatiotemporal realities within which they operate in order to increase the salience of their campaigns for people living in these specific contexts while also adapting to changing circumstances. Moreover, my analysis further indicated that the recruitment strategies armed groups can employ are constrained by the composition of territorial control. For example, the LTTE's ability to use indoctrination and social pressure as a means to pull young people into the movement was highly dependent upon their territorial control, as it was only in zones that they controlled that they had unrestricted access to local populations, which is hugely relevant to organizing recruitment sessions as well as maintaining everyday informal interactions with young people. Finally, my findings as well as other studies on LTTE recruits indicate that the socioeconomic standing of LTTE members varied over the course of the conflict. While the first generation of militants involved youngsters from diverse social groups including middle and upper class youth, the later generations were predominately drawn from the socioeconomically disadvantaged strata (de Silva et al. 2001; Harendra de Silva 2013; Thiranagama 2011). A systematic focus on if and how variation in territorial control and shifts in the social identity of recruits interact with changes in recruitment tactics could improve our understanding of how and why rebels change their strategy and of whether and how they adjust their tactics to local contexts and the identities of targeted populations.

Focusing on spatiotemporal variation in recruitment paths may also shed light on organizational dynamics within armed groups. As Hoover Green (2017) argues, the ways that individuals are recruited is likely to have a bearing on the attitudinal and behavioral predispositions with which they enter an armed group. This, in turn, means that spatiotemporal variation in recruitment patterns are likely to shape socialization dynamics within armed groups. That is, how are recruits with very different conflict experiences and predispositions toward the group socialized into a coherent fighting force? Are there internal conflicts between fractions who mobilized at different stages of a war and/or from different conflict zones? Finally, do people who follow a specific path stay in the movement longer than others who followed another path? My data suggests that while the overall commitment of activists does not depend on their path to militancy, their motivations for continued recruitment vary depending on their recruitment trajectory. Connecting spatiotemporal variation in recruitment paths to organizational dynamics within armed groups could thus be a promising way to enhance scholarly understanding of the internal

dynamics of armed groups—what has been to date a relatively understudied topic in the literature on civil war.

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