

Explaining Recruitment to Extremism: A Bayesian Hierarchical Case-Control Approach

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Nov 16, 2023

Also published in *Political Analysis*

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A study on who joins extremist and terrorist movements and why, offering new quantitative methods to approach the problem.

To read the full version of this article, coauthored with researchers Roberto Cerina, Christopher Barrie, and Neil Ketchley, [visit the Cambridge University Press website.](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/political-analysis/article/abs/explaining-recruitment-to-extremism-a-bayesian-hierarchical-casecontrol-approach/BE7142045C0E12CC02FE60347821C37B)

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Who joins extremist movements? Answering this question is beset by methodological challenges as survey techniques are infeasible and selective samples provide no counterfactual. Recruits can be assigned to contextual units, but this is vulnerable to problems of ecological inference. In this article, we elaborate a technique that combines survey and ecological approaches. The Bayesian hierarchical case-control design that we propose allows us to identify individual-level and contextual factors patterning the incidence of recruitment to extremism, while accounting for spatial autocorrelation, rare events, and contamination. We empirically validate our approach by matching a sample of Islamic State (ISIS) fighters from nine MENA countries with representative population surveys enumerated shortly before recruits joined the movement. High-status individuals in their early twenties with college education were more likely to join ISIS. There is more mixed evidence for relative deprivation. An accompanying package provides functionality for applied researchers to implement our approach... ❖

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