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Research Article

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Foreign Legionnaires and Military Mutinies

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Abstract

The composition of the armed forces is, by now, well established as a major factor determining the risk of coups d'état. However, military discontent not only manifests in the form of coups but also as mutinies. This latter form of troop rebellion has received little empirical attention. We examine how the practice of recruiting foreigners into the armed forces affects the likelihood of such events and develop two arguments regarding a direct and a moderating effect of legionnaires on mutiny risk. First, we contend that the recruitment of legionnaires is likely to cause material-based grievances, hence be perceived as detrimental to the corporate interests, wages, and promotion prospects of the rank-and-file, and thus troops will oppose the introduction of such recruitment policies. We hence expect the onset of legionnaire recruitment policies to be associated with an increased risk of mutinies. However, once such policies are in place, the presence of legionnaires can mitigate the effects of other mutiny drivers as foreign recruits impede local soldiers' task-related grievances and thus incentives to mutiny in reaction to them. Using global data over the period 1948–2015, we find empirical support for the expectations derived from both arguments.

Resumen

Hoy en día, ya se considera como establecido el hecho de que la composición de las fuerzas armadas es un factor importante que determina el riesgo de golpes de Estado. Sin embargo, el descontento en el ámbito militar no solo se manifiesta en forma de golpes de Estado, sino también en forma de motines. Esta última forma de rebelión por parte de las de tropas ha recibido poca atención empírica. Estudiamos el efecto que tiene la práctica consistente en reclutar extranjeros para las fuerzas armadas sobre la probabilidad de que sucedan tales eventos y desarrollamos dos hipótesis relativas a un efecto directo y moderador de los legionarios con relación al riesgo de motín. En primer lugar, argumentamos que es probable que el reclutamiento de legionarios cause agravios materiales y que, por lo tanto, se perciba como perjudicial para los intereses corporativos, los salarios y las perspectivas de promoción de las bases. En consecuencia, las tropas se opondrán a la introducción de tales políticas de reclutamiento. Por lo tanto, es de esperar que el inicio de las políticas de reclutamiento de legionarios se asocie con un mayor riesgo de motines. Sin embargo, una vez que se aplican estas políticas, la presencia de legionarios puede mitigar los efectos de otros motines, ya que los reclutas extranjeros obstaculizan las quejas relacionadas con las tareas de los soldados locales y, en consecuencia, los incentivos para amotinarse en reacción a estos. Utilizamos datos globales del período entre 1948 y 2015, los cuales nos proporcionan apoyo empírico para las expectativas derivadas de ambas hipótesis.

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Résumé

Il ne fait aujourd'hui aucun doute que la composition des forces armées constitue un facteur déterminant du risque de coups d'État. Néanmoins, si des coups d'État peuvent manifester le mécontentement militaire, celui-ci peut aussi prendre la forme de mutineries. Or, cette forme de rébellion des troupes n'a reçu que peu d'attention empirique. Nous examinons quelle est l'incidence de la pratique de recrutement d'étrangers dans les forces armées sur la probabilité de tels événements, avant de développer deux arguments s'agissant d'un effet direct et modérateur des légionnaires sur le risque de mutinerie. D'abord, nous affirmons que le recrutement de légionnaires est susceptible d'engendrer des griefs matériels, et donc d'être perçu comme nocif pour les intérêts commerciaux, les salaires et les possibilités de promotions des hommes de troupe. Aussi les troupes s'opposeront-elles à l'introduction de telles politiques de recrutement. Par conséquent, nous pensons que l'instauration de politiques de recrutement de légionnaires sera associée à une augmentation du risque de mutineries. Cependant, une fois ces politiques en place, la présence de légionnaires peut atténuer les effets d'autres facteurs de mutinerie, car les recrues étrangères amenuisent les griefs relatifs aux tâches des soldats locaux, et donc les motivations de mutinerie qui s'y rapportent. À l'aide de données mondiales sur la période 1948-2015, nous trouvons des éléments pour venir étayer nos attentes dérivées de ces deux arguments.

Keywords: Foreign recruitment, civil–military relations, mutiny, legionnaires

Palabras clave: Reclutamiento extranjero, relaciones cívico-militares, motines, legionarios

Mots clés: recrutement d'étrangers, relations entre civils et militaires, mutinerie, légionnaires

Introduction

Most research examining civil–military relations and the impacts of coup-proofing strategies has focused on coups d'état as the main manifestation of military rebellious behavior. However, while coups represent the extreme bounds of military dissatisfaction, they are not the only way through which active members of the armed forces express their discontent and seek to influence political outcomes and governmental policies. In many other instances, troops mutiny, that is, they collectively revolt, often publicly, but, in contrast to coups, do not do so to seize political power (e.g., Rose 1982; Dwyer 2017; Johnson 2021). More specifically, mutinies are overt forms of communication in which members of the armed forces seek concessions to rectify grievances, often related to material interests, but their goals are not aimed at unseating the sitting executive (Dwyer 2015b, 2017).[1] Instead, mutineers protest with the expectation that their costly actions can push elites to make changes that would ultimately satisfy their discontent. Understanding the determinants of such events is relevant since mutinies often entail violent acts and can quickly evolve into military coups or civil conflicts (Johnson 2021; Schiel, Powell, and Faulkner 2021).

Mutinies are at least as common as coups. Curiously, according to existing global data, there has been an equal number of mutinies and coup attempts between 1946 and 2018, with 474 instances of each type of event (Powell and Thyne 2011; Johnson 2021). And since the end of the Cold War, mutinies have even occurred more often than attempted coups, becoming one of the primary forms of military insubordination, particularly in the African continent (Dwyer and Tansey 2020; Schiel, Powell, and Faulkner 2021). Fully understanding the complex dynamics of conflictual civil–military relations thus requires looking beyond coups and paying attention to other, often lesser, forms of military rebellion, such as mutinies, which may also differ from coups in their determinants (Dwyer 2015a; Dwyer and Tansey 2020).

In this research, we follow the large literature on the relationship between the organization of state security forces and expressions of discontent within them (e.g., Powell 2012; Böhmelt and Pilster 2015; Harkness 2016, 2018; Albrecht and Eibl 2018; De Bruin 2018, 2020; Matthews 2022; Chin et al. 2022; Chin, Song,

1 It is important to note that mutinies, like coups, are inherently risky and costly. While they are overt signals of discontent designed to capture attention and force a reaction, soldiers may, at times, have other, less overt ways to communicate with leaders.

and Wright 2023; Song 2022; Choulis et al. 2023; Mehrl and Escribà-Folch 2024). However, we investigate whether the recruitment policies and practices affecting the *composition* of the armed forces influence the occurrence not of military *coups* but of lower level rebellions, namely *mutinies*, given both the prevalence of such events and the lack of scholarship investigating how organizational policies impact the likelihood of these specific bouts of insubordination. Particularly, our focus is on implications of the recruitment of foreign nationals, that is, the integration of so-called *legionnaires* into a country's armed forces. Legionnaires, as defined by Grasmeder (2021, 152), are "uniformed personnel who serve in a state's armed forces, but who—at the time of their service—are neither citizens of that state nor, in the days of the empire, subjects of the government." They are foreign recruits and, hence, members of the security forces, including both "foreigners who volunteer and those whom states conscript" (Grasmeder 2021, 153). Additionally, and distinguishing them from allied soldiers, seconded officers, or military advisers, legionnaires are under only one chain of command, "that of the state whose military they join" (Grasmeder 2021, 152). This means that, for instance, British or French officers serving in post-colonial armies in the wake of independence would only be considered to be legionnaires if they were no longer members of their home militaries.

Legionnaires are also different from mercenaries, as well as distinct from private contractors, which operate outside the formal military structure and are not organizationally integrated into the regular armed forces and hence also have a different chain of command. Where legionnaires are generally seen as legitimate participants in armed conflict and are bound by the domestic laws and regulations governing the armed forces as well as international laws governing the conduct of soldiers, mercenaries operate in both a moral and legal gray area, having been deemed illegal by the additional protocols I and II of the Geneva Convention. Motivated primarily, if not exclusively by private interests and for profit, mercenaries' loyalties traditionally lie with the highest bidder whereas legionnaires, as a general rule, become formally integrated within state institutions and, willfully or otherwise, swear an oath of allegiance to the state. The command and control structure for mercenaries is also typically distinct from legionnaires given the former operate on an ad-hoc basis and may have higher degrees of operational independence.

Like mercenaries, private contractors (e.g., personnel of private military and security companies) are typically contracted by the state to perform specific military or security-related services. These personnel, and the corporations they are under, also have incentives to remain independent from the armed forces given their for-profit orientation and the contractual basis of their relationship(s) with the state. This often gives them broader financial flexibility, to say nothing of the operational flexibility and freedom associated with remaining distinct from the armed forces. Additionally, unlike mercenaries, private contractors have a clearer legal status in international law, are part of a corporate structure that adds to their legitimacy, are bound by corporate oversight, and traditionally operate with "the explicit consent of the national governments concerned, not only the receiving state, but also the one where the [company] is headquartered" (Adams 2002, 56). Some have argued that the true indicator distinguishing mercenaries from private military and security contractors has less to do with the differences between the two enterprises and more to do with the evolving international norms that have enhanced the legitimacy of the latter and further distinguished them from their mercenary predecessors (Petersohn 2014). Regardless, both mercenaries and private military and security contractors operate in support, but formally outside of a state's security institutions, distinguishing them from legionnaires. And while legionnaires may lack citizenry links to the state, "in organizational terms...[they] are identical to its citizen and/or imperial troops" (Grasmeder 2021, 152). Overall, while mercenaries' and contractors' contractual relations with the state may serve similar purposes in terms of buttressing military capabilities, they remain formal "outsiders" from the military and, in contrast to legionnaires, are generally not subject to the same chains of command as "regular," citizen soldiers.

As noted above, while mercenarism is illegal under international humanitarian law, mercenaries are still visible features of modern-day armed conflict and the evolution/maturation of the mercenary business has led to an abundance of private military and security firms whose legality is often far less questionable even if moral questions abound. But while the use of mercenaries and private contractors has become an increasingly visible feature in modern-day warfare and the object of international prohibition (e.g., Avant 2000, 2005; Singer 2003; Kinsey 2006), many governments continue to recruit legionnaires into their armed forces.

Indeed, this practice has become increasingly common since the end of World War II, especially among autocracies where leaders see legionnaires as a multifunctional tool that both counterbalances against internal threats from the armed forces and simultaneously insulates rulers from civilian unrest (Grasmeder 2021;

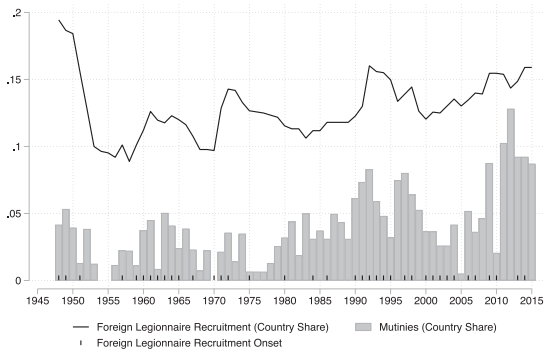

Figure 1. Legionnaires and mutinies, 1948–2015.

Mehrl and Escribà-Folch 2024). Figure 1 presents temporal trends in legionnaire recruitment and mutinies, which show that both phenomena vary quite substantially across time. Mutinies were relatively rare during the Cold War, then increased in the early and late 1990s, and saw another peak around 2010. But even at the very peak in 2012, at most one out of every eight countries saw a mutiny occurring, making them rare events. In contrast, mostly due to colonial inheritances, legionnaire recruitment policies topped out at the very beginning of our period of observation, just after World War II. However, after a decline in the 1950s, more and more countries across all regions have been introducing policies stipulating the recruitment of foreigners. Figure 1 also indicates that such recruitment onsets happened quite regularly throughout the period of observation, though especially in the 1960s and after the end of the Cold War.[2]

This paper expands our understanding of the consequences of legionnaire recruitment and the determinants of military mutinies. Mehrl and Escribà-Folch (2024) show that nondemocratic rulers can guard themselves against two core challenges to their tenure, coups and popular uprisings, by recruiting foreigners into their armed forces. They claim that legionnaires' presence within the military inhibits officers' ability to intervene in government. But while the presence of outsiders might dampen officers' ability to stage and launch a coup, the incorporation of non-nationals, or official policies that allow for their recruitment, may have unintended consequences—generating internal frictions that can influence the rank-and-files' and junior officers' willingness to engage in lesser forms of military insubordination. Indeed, research on foreign fighters in nonstate armed groups highlights the myriad challenges of incorporating outsiders, including issues related to internal cohesion (Doctor 2021). Such concerns are particularly acute at the onset of the incorporation of foreign enlistees.

Since mutinies are typically driven by (material and nonmaterial) grievances connected to troops' conditions of service, we posit, on the one hand, that, by increasing competition, undermining cohesion, causing tensions with military leadership, and worsening opportunities for local soldiers, the adoption of a policy of recruiting foreign legionnaires into the armed forces will make mutinies more likely by causing service-based grievances. We thus claim that adopting a policy of recruiting foreigners into the armed forces has an unconditional positive effect on the risk of mutinies. On the other hand, however, we also argue that the presence of such legionnaires within the armed forces can mitigate the effect of task-based mutiny drivers—such as international conflict, internal conflict, and mass protests—as legionnaires would reduce native soldiers' exposure to these sources of grievance. Using a global dataset on mutinies and foreign recruitment practices covering the 1948–2015 period, our empirical results provide support for our main expectations. We find evidence in line with the hypothesis that mutinies are more likely to occur in the wake of legionnaire recruitment onsets. But our results are also consistent with the idea that legionnaires reduce the risk of mutinies due to task-based grievances, as the incidence of both intra- and interstate conflict is associated with mutinies only for states without foreign recruits among their armed forces. Taken together, these insights increase our understanding of the consequences of legionnaire recruitment for civil–military relations, while highlighting a case where the dynamics of mutinies and coups differ substantially (see Dwyer and Tansey 2020).

The Arguments: Foreign Legionnaires and Military Mutinies

As noted above, mutinies are an increasingly common form of military insubordination—a type of military revolt in which troops attempt to publicly and overtly communicate their dissatisfaction with the status quo to higher authorities across the military and political sphere (Dwyer 2015b). And unlike coups, mutinies almost always stem from the bottom-up; that is, rank-and-file troops are often those leading the charge. For instance, according to available cross-national data, the

2 See the Online Supplementary Materials for a list of all such legionnaire recruitment onsets in the period 1948–2015.

majority of mutinies since 1945 have been orchestrated by foot soldiers, i.e., nonofficers.[3] Both qualitative and quantitative evidence suggest that mutinies are mainly driven by grievances having to do with soldiers' conditions of service, where soldiers feel aggrieved by military and/or political corruption, lack of pay and/or promotions, or find themselves materially under-resourced (e.g., Garrison 2001; Hechter, Pfaff, and Underwood 2016; Dwyer 2017; Pfaff and Hechter 2020; Codjo 2021; Ikem et al. 2022). The very few existing cross-national works on the occurrence of mutinies have identified some key determinants of such events (Johnson 2018, 2021; Schiel, Powell, and Daxecker 2020; Schiel, Powell, and Faulkner 2021): Higher per capita income and military expenditures per soldier reduce mutiny risk; whereas such acts of insubordination are more likely to occur in anocracies and military regimes, countries with larger militaries, in the post-Cold War period, and during conflicts. Several potential explanatory factors related to coup-proofing strategies remain unexplored, however.

We examine the impact of one practice affecting the composition of the armed forces, namely, the recruitment of foreign nationals (i.e. legionnaires) into the armed forces. Along with the degree of institutionalization, the recruitment and promotion practices shaping the *composition* of the security forces' personnel and officer corps constitute a crucial dimension in structuring civil–military relations (Horowitz 1985; Feaver 1999; Greitens 2016; Lutterbeck 2013). As numerous works show, broad-based conscription or, alternatively, drawing on specific social or ethnic groups, or foreigners, influences the incentive structure of the members of the armed forces in critical ways and, in turn, their propensity to remain loyal or, contrarily, rebel or defect (e.g., McLauchlin 2010; Lutterbeck 2011; Roessler 2011; Pion-Berlin, Esparza, and Grisham 2014; Cebul and Grewal 2022; Choulis 2022; Chin, Song, and Wright 2023).

In this section, we present two sets of arguments leading, in turn, to two distinct empirical expectations about how the adoption of foreign recruitment and the presence of foreign legionnaires within the armed forces may influence the occurrence of military mutinies. In particular, we posit that the presence of legionnaires can have both a direct and a moderating effect on the likelihood of low-level military rebellion.

With regard to the direct effect, we argue that recruiting foreigners can represent a critical source of *service-based* grievances for local military personnel, which may incentivize them to rebel in distinct ways. Previous work investigating the impact of ethnic stacking has found that building or re-shaping ethnic armies often sparks resistance and opposition among officers and soldiers, thereby increasing the risk of preemptive coups (Horowitz 1985; Harkness 2016, 2018).[4] But coups are only one way, in fact, the most extreme way, in which troops may signal discontent over organizational shifts. Mirroring this logic, we suggest that the rank-and-file as well as junior officer ranks will see the recruitment of legionnaires, whose incorporation can profoundly alter the internal composition of the military, as detrimental to their individual and corporate interests and, at times, as an unequivocal signal of their gradual displacement. In other words, relying on foreign recruits sends a signal to troops, real or perceived, about their value to the institution of the armed forces. There are at least two, nonmutually exclusive reasons why legionnaire recruitment may ruffle the officers and rank-and-file and encourage mutinous activity specifically.

First, foreign recruitment may cause nonmaterial grievances as incorporating foreign officers may trigger tensions with military leadership (Johnson 2018). Governments recruit foreign officers because of their need to import specific skills and expertise that native officers may lack or to increase loyalty among the officer corps (Grasmeder 2021). Foot soldiers and lower-rank officers, those who may lack the necessary agency to stage a putsch, but still seek ways to signal their discontent via smaller-scale collective mobilization, may resent the presence of these foreign recruits. Such agitation may be especially acute when outside agents are brought in to serve in important command positions, but regardless of the role they undertake, outsiders' presence may be viewed as illegitimate and as devaluing native soldiers. Placing non-nationals within the armed forces generally, and in key positions specifically, often represents an interference into the organizational culture, the promotion procedures, and the preexisting command structure––conditions that have been clearly linked to mutinous activity (e.g., Dwyer 2017). Local soldiers may see the incorporation of foreigners as hurting the military as an institution by undermining its cohesiveness, operational effectiveness, discipline, and unity (Huntington 1957). Soldiers and officers may thus rebel due to their own organizational interests, in support of (their) higher-ranking

3 In some cases, though, military officers, typically junior officers, have led mutinies. For more information on the typical rank of mutineers see Johnson (2021).

4 Similarly, other research has found that counterbalancing the army and seeking to personalize the security apparatus can also increase the short-term risk of coups (De Bruin 2018, 2020; Song 2022; Chin et al. 2022).

officers affected by purges or demotions and replaced by foreigners, or may just refuse to follow orders from outsiders due to their real/perceived lack of legitimacy. Furthermore, in some instances, foreign officers are appointed with the goal of monitoring certain units and of purging rival groups within the army which may only increase hostilities and decrease internal cohesion. Yet, distinct from coups, mutinying becomes an overt way to communicate with political leadership; an attempt to force changes in policies. Through costly signals, mutineers believe that their actions can ultimately influence policy and, distinct from coups, have incentives for leaders to stay in power as they have the authority to rectify their specific grievances.

Second, legionnaire recruitment may negatively affect local soldiers' economic and labor conditions and, hence, cause material grievances. As Horowitz (1985, 550) remarks, "By and large, where foreigners are used, they are employed *en masse*." Moreover, such employment of troops is often the result of the presence of domestic threats caused by political exclusion and untrustworthy populations (Hanson and Lin-Greenberg 2019; Grasmeder 2021). Consequently, foreign recruitment often has a strategic motivation, according to which governments seek to "deepen the disconnect between the armed forces and the local population by limiting interpersonal links, social solidarity as well as the presence of distrusted ethnic groups within the army and in command positions," but also to undermine the military's cohesion and coordination ability (Mehrl and Escribà-Folch 2024, 719). Under such circumstances, by increasing competition for limited resources and signaling an attempt at exclusion based on ascription, the incorporation of foreign recruits is likely to be perceived by the local rank-and-file and junior officers as a risk to their material interests, including their positions, jobs, promotion prospects, pay, and status. The fact that such opportunities are curtailed by a bias in favor of outsiders may exacerbate soldiers' perception of unfairness and discrimination resulting from being sidelined and losing their influence within the army.

In short, regardless of the scale and scope in which they are employed—whether they displace a local soldier, command over them, or are folded into the rank-and-file—a state's decision to pursue a policy of integrating legionnaires can generate severe intra-military tensions that manifest as distinct forms of military revolt, and specifically, mutinies. Shifts in organizational policies, particularly in military organizations, often trigger significant resistance and friction and this is especially true in the period immediately following the adoption of new policies and even more so when those policies threaten (real or perceived) the organizational interests of the armed forces (e.g., Kaufman 1994; Avant 1996; Ucko 2008; Long 2016). Concerns surrounding implementation and execution of new policies take time to unfold and questions abound about the potential consequences, which can trigger negative reactions. As a result, rank-and-file soldiers, threatened by such changes, may act out in ways that overtly convey their concerns.

The case of Uganda under Idi Amin illustrates some of these mechanisms. Soon after seizing power in 1971, Idi Amin began enlisting numerous foreigners, mostly from neighboring Sudan and Zaire. This practice also included placing foreigners in command positions of strategic security units and agencies. Amin's security forces came to be principally "composed of non-Ugandans which made up of three-quarters of the army" (Nugent 2019, 234). This policy, aimed at marginalizing and purging rival ethnic groups (and even formerly allied ones) within the army and replacing them with loyalists, caused intense anger and fear among targeted groups which translated into unrest, infighting, and several mutinies (see Chin, Wright, and Carter 2022). For example, such resentment led to mutiny and fighting as soon as 1971, when Acholi and Langi soldiers started being not only sidelined but also brutally killed. The presence of rapidly promoted foreigners heading repressive agencies terrorizing suspected dissident troops, such as Ali Towelli, a Sudanese, chief of the Public Safety Unit, or Hussein Marella, also a Sudanese, head of the Military Police, was also a source of major unrest in the following years.

Based on these arguments, *we expect the adoption of the practice of recruiting foreigners to increase the risk of mutinies (H1)*.

Alongside this expected direct, unconditional effect, we argue, however, that, once a policy of foreign recruitment is in place, the presence of foreign recruits within the armed forces should have a *mitigating* effect on the likelihood of mutinies. Besides services-related grievances, existing studies also highlight the importance of task-related factors such as the involvement in internal and international conflicts or the occurrence of popular uprisings as potential drivers of mutinies (Garrison 2001; Johnson 2018). Some tasks, such as fighting in conflicts or repressing protesters, involve military members having to carry out risky and costly activities. Consequently, such events, by inducing tension with military and political leadership, entailing personal risks, and intensifying grievances over pay, equipment, training, or mission, can be important causes of troop discontent and, in turn, of mutiny and defection. For example, as documented for the case of Nigeria's

counterinsurgency efforts against Boko Haram (Ikem et al. 2022), soldiers resent having to fight if they are ill-equipped. And concerning internal instability in particular, regular troops and officers may disapprove of the tasks entailed in fighting a counterinsurgency campaign or in quelling mass protests. Indeed, Albrecht and Koehler (2018) suggest that moral grievances and fear led to troop desertion during the Civil War. Similarly, Johnson (2018, 5) contends that Civil Wars increase mutiny risk as, "due to risk aversion, foot soldiers are likely to shirk when bad strategy is selected by military leadership." More generally, Pion-Berlin, Esparza, and Grisham (2014, 234) emphasize that "missions that are, in the military's mind, professionally degrading or otherwise incompatible with the military's raison d'être are ones they prefer not undertaking." We thus focus on events such as Civil War, interstate conflict, and mass protests as contexts where *task-based* grievances are likely to arise among the members of the armed forces.

But what is more, recent research on military defection during these events also identifies troop composition as a crucial factor. Accordingly, defection in the face of protests has been found to be more likely from highly fragmented security forces, but less likely from highly specialized ones (Lutscher 2016; Dworschak 2020). Further, recruitment and promotion based on ascription have been shown to be related to defections during mass uprisings (e.g., McLauchlin 2010; Makara 2013; Nepstad 2013; Morency-Laflamme and McLauchlin 2019).[5] And likewise, McLauchlin (2015) shows that heterogeneity in military units makes defection during Civil Wars more likely by undermining norms of cooperation. Our argument follows these studies by highlighting the interaction of troop composition and the emergence of task-based grievances.

More specifically, we argue that, once foreign recruitment is ongoing and institutionalized, rulers can benefit from two characteristics of having incorporated foreign legionnaires. Concerning opportunities, due to their dependency-driven loyalty and weak links to wider society, foreign enlistees might hinder the military's ability to organize when certain grievances become salient. Lacking interpersonal links to other military members and to society in general, foreign recruits are less likely to join collective acts of insubordination as they do not typically share local soldiers' views and grievances. The presence of legionnaires thus introduces coordination problems to collective insubordination efforts of the military, hampering its ability to plan and carry out costly forms of revolt, like coups (Singh 2014; Mehrl and Escribà-Folch 2024). However, coups certainly require a critical mass of officers and soldiers to communicate first and then coordinate to overthrow the incumbent government and seize power. But mutinies are lesser forms of rebellious behavior that do not necessarily require the type of broad-based mobilization nor the high degree of coordination necessary to stage a putsch. Indeed, mutinies may just involve the localized participation of some units or groups of soldiers located in certain barracks. As a result, soldiers' ability to coordinate and engage in collective expressions of discontent in the form of mutinies might not be critically undermined by the presence of foreigners.

Rather than their general ability to mutiny, we posit that the presence of legionnaires may actually reduce *incentives* for insubordination among local military personnel in the event of conflict or domestic turmoil. Such events, especially violent conflicts, require soldiers to perform costly tasks. And foreign legionnaires can be employed to shield native soldiers from performing some of these tasks—such as fighting in international or intrastate wars or repressing protests—that are common causes of troop's discontent, as discussed above. Thus, while legionnaires may intensify or create material-based concerns among the rank-and-file (related to promotion, wages, status, and effectiveness), they may reduce the emergence of, or quell simmering *task-related* grievances.

In particular, where legionnaires are recruited not *en masse* but due to their specific military know-how, their presence can mitigate native soldiers' concerns over ill-planning or being under-equipped to face an enemy in combat when they fight together. For instance, Laurent Gbagbo's government recruited Belarusian pilots and technicians to augment the capacity of the Air Force in Ivory Coast's first Civil War. In this regard, legionnaires mirror the effect that some governments seek from contracting private military and security companies. For instance, in their fight against Boko Haram, the Nigerian government solicited assistance from Specialised Tasks, Training, Equipment, and Protection, a firm that provided training, combat support, and technical know-how to boost the Nigerian military's counterinsurgency capacity (Campbell 2015). This recruitment was specifically adopted to guard against troops' discontent; particularly their frustration of being under-resourced when facing well-equipped militants.

But, most importantly, legionnaires can also be deployed instead of, not together with, native soldiers for tasks that might cause discontent among local military personnel. Specifically, foreign soldiers can be used for

5 Protests, especially nonviolent ones, can also incentivize coups. See, for example, Johnson and Thyne (2018) and Yukawa et al. (2022).

missions that are particularly dangerous or despised by "native" soldiers, including risky battlefield engagements, dealing with civilians and insurgents during civil conflicts, or violently crushing mass protests. For example, a large percentage of the soldiers fighting and dying in the service of Saudi Arabia and the UAE in Yemen in fact hold "Chadian, Chilean, Colombian, Libyan, Panamanian, Nigerien (from Niger), Somalian, Salvadoran, Sudanese, and Ugandan" passports (Barany 2021, 132). Bahrain's security forces used their numerous foreign recruits to face protesters during the Arab Spring and, once this uprising was over, even engaged on "a fresh recruitment campaign in Pakistan to [add] as many as 2,500 riot police officers, drill instructors, and security guards" in order to be prepared for future protests (Barany 2021, 128). This renewed recruitment drive came after, as Hanson and Lin-Greenberg (2019) point out, Bahrain's legionnaire security forces had successfully suppressed the country's Arab Spring while in other countries, domestically staffed security forces often revolted instead of using force against protesting civilians (Lutterbeck 2013; Makara 2013; Nepstad 2013). In other words, under certain conditions, delegating undesirable tasks to foreign recruits may offset the rank-and-file's disposition to mutiny.

Based on these arguments, we expect the presence of legionnaires to moderate the effect of task-related factors on the risk of occurrence of mutinies. Specifically, *legionnaire recruitment should mitigate the impact of task-based triggers of military mutinies, i.e., violent internal and external conflict, and domestic unrest (H2).*

Research Design

We test the expectations developed above using a country-year dataset on foreign legionnaire recruitment and mutinies spanning the period 1948–2015. Data on mutinies comes from Johnson (2021), the variable mutiny takes the value 1 if a country experienced at least one such event in the year under observation and 0 otherwise.[6] We take data on legionnaires from Grasmeder (2021) and construct two variables from it, reflecting the *onset* and *existence* of legionnaire recruitment policies. The former takes the value 1 if a country is coded as having a policy to recruit non-nationals in year t but not in the preceding year $t-1$; it is set to 0 if no such policy is in place or if such a policy was in place in both t and $t-1$. The latter measure makes no distinction between the onset and continuation of legionnaire recruitment policies, all instances of such a policy existing thus take the value 1.[7] We note that while foreign legionnaires are quite common in our estimation sample, being present in 14.2% of country-year observations, both mutinies and legionnaire recruitment *onsets* are rare. Specifically, we observe 276 mutiny cases and 43 country-years where the recruitment of legionnaires was initiated. As our dependent variable is binary, we use logistic regression models and account for time dependence by clustering standard errors on the country and including cubic polynomials of time since the last mutiny (see Carter and Signorino 2010).

In testing the relationship between legionnaire recruitment onsets and mutinies, we control for several variables that, based on existing research, could affect the occurrence of mutinies (Johnson 2021; Schiel, Powell, and Daxecker 2020; Schiel, Powell, and Faulkner 2021) and credibly also rulers' decision to begin recruiting foreigners into their armed forces. We thus control for regime type, population size, defense spending per soldier, wealth (GDP per capita), economic growth, as well as whether a country is experiencing an intrastate armed conflict or mass protests and is involved in a militarized interstate dispute.[8] Data for these variables comes from Anders, Fariss, and Markowitz (2020), the Correlates of War National Capabilities and Militarized Interstate Disputes datasets (Singer, Bremer, and Stucke 1972; Palmer et al. 2022), the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Davies, Pettersson, and Öberg 2022), Chin, Song, and Wright 2023, and the Polity IV dataset. In addition, we include dummies indicating whether a country-year occurred during the Cold War (pre-1990) and its world region to capture structural differences in mutiny probability.

6 Johnson (2021) follows Rose (1982) in defining a mutiny as "an act of collective insubordination in which troops revolt against lawfully constituted authority" (1982, 561) while not seeking to take executive power themselves.

7 While available data on legionnaires does not provide details on the specific number of legionnaires integrated into a state's armed forces, in order to be included in the dataset as incorporating legionnaires a state's policy had to yield at least one hundred new personnel. Included recruitment policies thus would generate a significant number of foreign recruits in smaller militaries and, even in bigger ones, would approximately suffice to staff an entire company. For more information see Grasmeder (2021).

8 To establish temporal order and as moving from the wish to recruit legionnaires to actually doing so is not instantaneous, we lag the variables capturing economic and conflict dynamics by 1 year.

Table 1. Foreign legionnaire onsets and mutinies

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Foreign legionnaire onset	1.398**	1.350**	1.159**	1.160**	1.027**
	(0.395)	(0.421)	(0.453)	(0.438)	(0.472)
Cold War		−0.738**	−0.547**	−0.632**	−0.572**
		(0.144)	(0.141)	(0.144)	(0.135)
Anocracy			0.603**	0.599**	0.453**
			(0.160)	(0.159)	(0.156)
Democracy			−0.370	−0.311	−0.336
			(0.265)	(0.270)	(0.254)
Population			4.788**	5.150**	3.916**
			(0.714)	(0.778)	(0.819)
Military spending per soldier				−0.063	−0.076
				(0.056)	(0.052)
GDP per capita				−0.127	−0.055
				(0.330)	(0.331)
Δ GDP per capita				−2.615**	−1.683*
				(0.959)	(0.961)
Intrastate conflict					0.643**
					(0.165)
Interstate conflict					0.102
					(0.151)
Protest					0.766**
					(0.198)
Constant	−1.799**	−1.859**	−15.583**	−15.739**	−12.541**
	(0.142)	(0.191)	(2.019)	(2.169)	(2.246)
Observations	8087	8087	8087	8087	8087
AIC	2192.435	2145.036	2084.791	2083.600	2055.265
Log likelihood	−1091.217	−1061.518	−1028.396	−1024.800	−1007.633

Notes: Dependent variable: Mutiny. Region-fixed effects and cubic polynomials were included in models but omitted from presentation. Standard errors are clustered on the country in parentheses. *$p < 0.10$ and **$p < 0.05$.

To test our second expectation, that legionnaire presence reduces the effects of known drivers of mutinies, we then adapt the fully specified model from Table 1 by exchanging the legionnaire recruitment *onset* measure for the one that captures the *existence* of such policies and then estimate six further models where this measure is respectively interacted with one of six variables: defense spending per soldier, GDP per capita, economic growth (that is, changes in GDP per capita), intrastate conflict, interstate conflict, and mass protest.[9] We focus on these six variables for two specific reasons. On one hand, soldiers may be less likely to mutiny under better economic circumstances, i.e. if the government spends more on them or the general economic situation is positive. On the other hand and as discussed above, soldiers should be more inclined to mutiny when situational factors increase their personal risk or require they engage in costly activities, i.e. if they have to fight in a bloody conflict, engage in counterinsurgency, or crackdown (violently) mass protests.

It is important to emphasize that these variables speak to different elements of our argument regarding legionnaire presence as a moderator of mutiny drivers. In the case of military spending and the economic situation, legionnaires' presence may reduce rank-and-file soldiers ability to act upon their discontent but do nothing to minimize the discontent itself. But in the case of armed conflicts or mass uprisings, legionnaires may instead be used to take up unwanted or tasks, such as counterinsurgency operations or engage in the repression of protests, so that the native rank-and-file are less exposed to, and hence less aggrieved by them. In other words, legionnaires would reduce only the opportunity to mutiny due to economic and pay factors, but reduce both the opportunity and

9 We do not lag the variables in the interaction, otherwise the lag structure is unchanged.

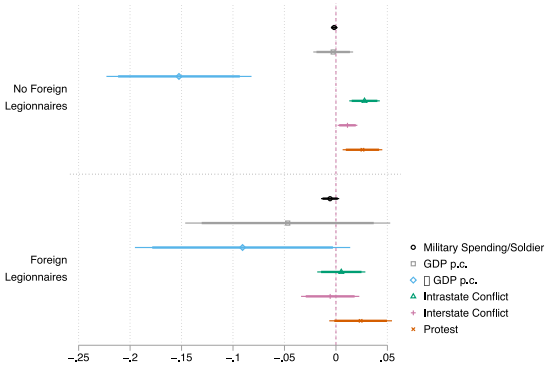

Figure 2. Legionnaires and mutiny triggers. Graph shows the change in the predicted probability of a mutiny associated with different mutiny triggers, in the presence and absence of legionnaires; dots give point estimates, while thick and thin whiskers represent 90% and 95% confidence intervals.

willingness to mutiny based on combat and policing tasks.

Results

The results of five models testing the first expectation are presented in Table 1. There, we first present a bivariate model and then introduce additional covariates step-by-step, moving from region- and period-dummies to structural controls for regime type and population, then adding the variables capturing military spending and economic dynamics, and finally arriving at the full model by also including the two conflict indicators. Across all five models, the onset of foreign recruitment is found to have a positive and statistically significant coefficient estimate, supporting the idea that mutinies are more likely when legionnaire recruitment, as a policy, is newly adopted. Substantively, moving from no legionnaire recruitment to newly starting this practice is associated with a 3.3%–4.4% increase in the probability of a mutiny occurring. Given how rare mutinies are overall, this effect estimate is substantively large, indicating that the initiation of policies targeting the recruitment of foreigners into the armed forces is associated with substantive increase in troops' likelihood to mutiny.

Turning to our second expectation, Figure 2 graphically presents the results of the six models investigating whether legionnaires have a conditioning effect on mutiny risk. They respectively interact foreign legionnaire recruitment with one of six mutiny drivers to test whether legionnaires' presence moderates their influence. We present full results tables for these models in the Online Supplementary Materials. Figure 2 shows changes in predicted probabilities associated with shifting the respective independent variable of interest by one unit when legionnaires are present and when they are not. There is evidence for legionnaires' presence moderating the influence of two of the mutiny triggers investigated here: intrastate and interstate armed conflict. When a country has no legionnaires in its armed forces, an intrastate conflict is associated with a 2.8% increase in the risk of a mutiny, but this effect estimate decreases to 0.5% and becomes statistically indistinguishable from 0 when foreigners are present in its armed forces. And while the effect estimate of interstate conflict is smaller, it is nonetheless associated with a 1.1% increase in mutiny risk when legionnaires are absent, but a statistically insignificant 0.6% decrease when they are present. As we show in the Online Supplementary Materials, these findings also replicate when using two different subsamples: one featuring all country-years where legionnaires are present and one where they are absent. There, both intra- and interstate conflict are found to be associated with increased mutiny risk in the subsample without legionnaires, but not in the legionnaire subsample. And importantly, it is unlikely that this difference is driven only by sample size as the coefficient estimates for both types of conflict are more than twice as large in the no legionnaire sample as compared to the legionnaire sample.

Our results for mass protests are less conclusive as we find that they are associated with a 2.5% increase in the probability of mutinies both in the presence and absence of legionnaires. And while only the latter estimate is statistically significant, perhaps indicating some support for the idea that mass uprisings increase mutiny risk only when foreign nationals do not serve in the armed forces, the confidence intervals of the two estimates overlap and, as we documented in the Online Supplementary Materials, there are not many cases where legionnaire presence and protests even coincide. These results should thus, at best, be taken with caution. Notably, Mehrl and Escribà-Folch (2024) show that the presence of legionnaires reduces mass protest incidence in the first place, implying that legionnaires do reduce protest-induced mutinies by shielding native troops from having to face such events, but that this occurs not by taking their place but instead by deterring protests in the first place.

In contrast, Figure 2 offers no evidence that the effects of any of the other three variables are substantively moderated by legionnaire presence. The effects of military spending per soldier and GDP per capita are statistically indistinguishable from, and indeed quite close to zero regardless of whether legionnaires serve in the armed forces or not. And while the effect of economic growth on mutiny risk appears to be smaller and sta-

tistically less impactful in the presence of legionnaires than when they are absent, it remains substantively large and statistically significant at the 90%-level also when the armed forces are not exclusively staffed by a country's own nationals. As such, we find support for the proposition that the *presence* of legionnaires in the armed forces is associated with a reduction of mutiny risk due to some factors—notably armed conflict and mass uprisings—for which these recruits alter rank-and-file soldiers' incentives to mutiny. But as opposed to foreign recruits' effect on coup attempts (Mehrl and Escribà-Folch 2024), this risk-reducing effect does not occur when only affecting soldiers' opportunity to express discontent.

Our findings on, first, the positive association between the onset of legionnaire recruitment and mutinies and, second, legionnaires' presence mitigating the effects of certain mutiny drivers, also hold up to several robustness checks which we summarize here and present in more detail in the appendix. For legionnaire recruitment onsets, we replace the pooled logistic regression model with a random effects model which takes into account unobserved heterogeneity between the countries in our sample and with a penalized maximum likelihood model that is appropriate for rare outcome events such as mutinies. We also introduce a flexible time trend, to allow for more complex trends in legionnaire recruitment and mutinies than the simple Cold War dummy. And we omit the covariate capturing military spending per soldier, as doing so allows us to increase the estimation sample and include two more cases of mutinies during legionnaire recruitment onsets.[10] The finding that such onsets are associated with increased mutiny risk persists across these models. But given the small number of mutinies and legionnaire recruitment onsets, we also acknowledge that this result may potentially be quite sensitive to adding new observations involving further mutinies or recruitment onsets. And while we seek to account for this via our covariate selection, the presented results may nonetheless still be affected by confounding from unknown factors which affect both countries' decision to recruit legionnaires into their armed forces and soldiers' probability to mutiny.

To investigate whether the relationship we explore applies only, as we expect, to lesser forms of civil–military discontent or instead also to higher level actions, we next replace our dependent variable mutiny with indicators of any coup attempt (taken from Powell and Thyne 2011) and, more specifically, attempts carried out by mid-ranking combat officers and high-ranking elite officers, respectively (taken from Albrecht, Koehler, and Schutz 2021). We find no evidence for a statistically significant relationship between legionnaire recruitment onsets and coup attempts, suggesting that, as we theorize above, the introduction of foreign recruits into the military is an unlikely trigger for the most costly forms of insubordination, but can exacerbate merit-based and/or material grievances amongst the rank-and-file, leading to an increased likelihood of mutiny. As we note, we attribute the divergent outcomes to the fact that mutinies generally face fewer coordination barriers as soldiers are attempting to trigger a shift in, or reconsideration of, organizational policy rather than overthrow the government.

As discussed above, we also replicate the models investigating whether the presence of foreign legionnaires moderates the effects of other mutiny drivers while splitting our county-year sample into two sub-samples, with and without legionnaires. And finally, we check for common support across the interaction models involving binary variables of interest.

Conclusion

This research explores the relationship between the recruitment of foreign legionnaires and military mutinies. It shows that while initially adopting a policy of recruiting foreigners into the armed forces can trigger discontent, increasing the likelihood of mutinies, the presence of legionnaires can actually mitigate the effect of some task-related mutiny drivers in the longer term. In other words, mutiny risk is likely to increase as policies related to legionnaire recruitment are first adopted and implemented–serving as a sort of shock to the rank-and-file who are most likely to feel threatened and aggrieved by the introduction of foreign troops. However, the risk of mutinies associated with the armed forces having to engage in costly tasks such as counterinsurgency activities, fighting abroad, or policing domestic protests is significantly reduced if foreign legionnaires are present. In short, foreign legionnaires can dampen discontent when the social and political environment is conflictual.

These findings substantially expand our understanding on the determinants of contentious civil–military relations by looking at forms of military insubordination that are costly signals of discontent, but less severe than coup attempts. While leaders can derive important benefits from recruiting legionnaires (see Mehrl and Escribà-Folch 2024), our results suggest that initiating this practice is not without some immediate risks. As we show here, the compositional practices regularly used to "coup-proof" militaries can also affect their probability of mutinying but, importantly, in ways that are distinct from coups. While legionnaire recruitment reduces

10 These are Syria 2013 and Afghanistan 2017.

coup risk, the trade-off is that it initially increases mutiny risk. However, rulers may find it a worthy trade-off *ceteris paribus*, as coups present a more significant threat and the recruitment of legionnaires can serve to mitigate other factors driving mutinies—highlighting here task-based grievances as important aspects for understanding mutinies.

Although not aimed at seizing power, mutinies are far from inconsequential. Such forms of military insubordination can be highly disruptive and become severe, destabilizing events. Importantly, mutinies can be catalysts for coups and civil conflict, undermine the effectiveness of the armed forces during conflict, and may even result in violence against civilians. Accordingly, this research also suggests pathways for future research both on mutinies and legionnaires. For mutinies, future work should more thoroughly investigate the task-based drivers of military disloyalty, also going beyond the current focus on mass protest campaigns (e.g., Lutterbeck 2011; Makara 2013; Nepstad 2013; Barany 2016; Croissant, Kuehn, and Eschenauer 2018; Morency-Laflamme and McLauchlin 2019; Chin, Song and Wright 2023). And for scholarship on foreign recruitment into the armed forces, there is substantial opportunity for additional data collection on the prevalence and characteristics of foreign legionnaires. For instance, due to data limitations, our analyses are only able to consider the onset of foreign recruitment policies and the presence of legionnaires, but it could be fruitful for future research to know foreign recruits' country of origin, the scale of legionnaires within a state, whether legionnaires are consistently folded into the institutions of the established security sector or stood up as separate units, and so on. Such granular detail would provide scholars an opportunity to better unpack the relationship between legionnaires and local soldiers, including the mechanisms leading to foreign recruits' acceptance or rejection.

Additionally, future work may investigate other consequences of foreign recruitment broadly construed, including considering a wider typology of foreign recruits distinct from legionnaires who may also be sought out as "coup-proofers," such as private military contractors, but whose incorporation may incite mutiny across the rank-and-file and some officers. While we join recent work on legionnaires in arguing that their presence can reduce military cohesion and with it, the armed forces' capability to coordinate actions that directly threaten the sitting executive, it is likely that these same effects will also reduce the armed forces' ability to coordinate effective action against external enemies or domestic insurgents (see Pilster and Böhmelt 2011; Talmadge 2015). Taken together, our analysis highlights the need to better understand second- and third-order effects of shifts in military recruitment policies and the armed forces' composition in an effort to more fully understand the true condition of a state's civil–military relations.

Supplementary Information

Supplementary information is available at the *Journal of Global Security Studies* data archive.

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