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Introducing the Response to Sponsorship Dataset: Determinants of Responses by Target States to State Sponsors of Rebel Groups

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Abstract

Empirical studies on the sponsorship of rebel groups have focused on understanding why and how supporter states help rebels, whether this engagement benefits the rebels, and the effects of sponsorship on the conflict outcomes. By comparison, the responses of target states to sponsorship behavior have been neglected despite the possibility of interstate crises, disputes, and conflict due to the sponsorship. This study introduces a new dataset, the Response Sponsorship Dataset (RSD), which measures target states' responses toward state sponsors of rebel groups intending to terminate the sponsorship. The data includes information on the responses of 58 target states to 102 supporter states concerning the support of 150 rebel groups between 1991 and 2010, comprising 3719 observations. The RSD identifies diplomatic, economic, militarized, domestic, covert responses and inaction as target state responses as well as classifying them as coercive or non-coercive based on target states' foreign policy engagements with sponsors. The RSD provides new opportunities for researchers and policymakers to analyze target responses with regards to conflict management and foreign policy as well as promising future research on support termination.

Keywords: State sponsorship, target response, rivalry, alliance, support type/level.

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Introduction

External support literature shows that supporter states have various reasons to provide help to rebel groups that especially target their adversaries (Wilkinson 1986; Salehyan 2008; Schultz 2010; Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham 2011; Maoz and San-Akca 2012; Tamm 2016; Karlén and Rauta 2023). The rationale for supporter states ranges from ideational factors to strategic/material interests. Sometimes the states that are deemed as sponsors do not have enough capacity to terminate rebel activities, some appear as neutral states that ignore the rebel presence, and others might not prevent the rebel activism on the grounds that they are

democratic states that enable non-violent mobilization for political causes even though the rebels are designated as terrorist groups by other states (and even by themselves) (Collins 2014; San-Akca 2016; Byman 2020). The study of external support also investigates whether the partnership between rebel groups and state supporters benefits the rebels or not (Jenkins 1990; Carter 2012; Aronson et al. 2015; Qiu 2022) and how this relationship between rebels and supporters affects the conflict processes (Cunningham 2010; Sawyer, Cunningham and Reed 2017; Khan and Zhaoying 2020). On the other hand, the literature remains limited to account for target state behavior against the state supporters of rebels (Carter and Pant 2019). Empirical studies have focused on the sides of supporter states and rebel groups to understand their motivations for partnership. Despite the problems associated with state support of rebel groups in terms of interstate relations and international security, the dearth of knowledge about the target state's behavior against this affair necessitates exploring how target states have been reacting to sponsors. While there is data on external state support of rebel groups in terms of which states give which rebel groups various forms of support threatening the target states, we do not have any data on how these target states have reacted against the supporter states. Target states do not only engage with counterterrorism activities to terminate rebel activities but also use various foreign policy tools to cease the support of sponsoring states for rebel groups since external support is found to be an important factor for the resilience of rebel groups both for material reasons and legitimacy concerns in addition to accounts that see external support as a prerequisite for rebel groups' survival (Carter, Van Nuys and Albayrak 2020).

Exploring the target state behavior when dealing with state sponsorship of rebel groups, I created an original Response to Sponsorship Dataset (RSD)[1] to see the various kinds of responses of target states towards supporter states through their foreign relations and interactions. The reason why I focus on the foreign relations of target and supporter states is that I treat the phenomenon of external support of rebels as a foreign policy strategy by the supporter states. Then, it is logical to assume that target states would react against the external support of rebels viewing it as a conduct of foreign policy behavior, and respond to supporter states to terminate sponsorship. Target states' behavior will depend on their perceived level of threat received from, especially the external security environment. In addition, domestic political considerations and factors related to state supporters and rebel groups might also matter when target states respond to external support of rebels. Therefore, the RSD includes factors related to target states, supporter states, and rebel groups containing both state-level and group-level variables. Accordingly, this article analyzes 58 target states, 102 supporter states, and 150 rebel groups that form 455 different triadic cases and in total 3719 observations between the years of 1991 and 2010.

The researchers can use the RSD to explore multiple issues regarding target responses to foreign state sponsors of rebel groups. The dataset can be used to systematically analyze why some target states behave more coercively than others when they confront rebel sponsorship. The data can be utilized to test hypotheses on a state-level and group-level of analysis. The study begins by describing the existing state of external support literature and the motivations for collecting the RSD. It then summarizes the data collection procedures and provides an overview

1 The RSD is available at: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/XNU8NO.

of the dataset, showing that target states have more frequently employed non-coercive forms of responses. Then, to demonstrate the empirical applications of the RSD, the article performs statistical analyses to explore the links between support type and the coerciveness of target responses; links between support level and the severity of target responses, and provides an inquiry into the possibility of retaliatory responses that can be studied in detail in future research.

The Literature on the Responses of Target States

Responses to external support of rebels, as part of counterterrorism, have received the most attention in the literature after the 9/11 attacks when the "war on terror" was declared by the United States (US) and its allies (Boyle 2008; De Goede 2008). Designated states as sponsors of terrorism were to be internationally condemned, and economically and politically isolated. The war on terror even instigated an invasion of a sovereign state in 2003 when the coalition forces bombed Iraq, a country listed as a state sponsor of terrorism since 1990 by the US (White House 2003). These accounts have focused more on the counterterrorism side of the debate while ignoring the interstate relations between the target and supporter states in general. On the other hand, external support for rebels conceptually deserves a broader understanding in terms of the responses of target states to the sponsorship. Existing studies have focused on military responses and sanctions that are coercive measures (Collins 2004; Li and Schaub 2004; Bapat et al. 2015; Wilner 2018). However, non-coercive responses to sponsorship have not yet been accounted for despite their abundant existence. Unlike the extant literature, I argue that the relationship between a rebel group and a supporter state might not necessarily incite coercive and conflictual responses from the targets. Because the support provided for the rebels is sometimes unintentional or passive (Byman 2007; San-Akca 2016). Another reason for less coercive measures to be taken against the supporter states could be the lack of rivalry or the existence of alliance networks between states that would alleviate the conflictual outcomes.

This comprehensive perspective for state support for rebels with the inclusion of factors conducive to less conflictual responses for supporter states, carries vital importance since it brings about variation in target state responses toward supporters. As earlier research has shown, target states have been using condemnations, economic sanctions, and coercive military actions to terminate sponsorship or punish the sponsor states (Rubin 2010). Nevertheless, embracing unintentional and passive forms of support in conceptualizing the state sponsorship, accounts for a broader range of responses employed by target states especially cooperative measures and non-responsive cases in addition to the coercive and violent reactions which are studied mostly in the previous literature. Similarly, allied or non-rival states could work through their problems by already institutionalized conflict management settings provided by alliances or lack of hostility might enable a more positive atmosphere for them to resolve the tensions created by state sponsorship of rebels. This premise rests on the assumption that responses to foreign states are not free from past interactions and the previous experiences of target states in terms of cooperative or conflictual attitudes towards their counterparts. Rivalry and alliance as strategic relationships between the states empirically capture the existing state of affairs between target and supporter states in order to deduce the effects of the external security environment on target state responses.

Apart from the lack of a study to investigate target responses, external support is treated by the previous research as if it is always intentional (Qiu 2022; Meier 2023) and while there is an emphasis on rivalry when defining the strategic relations between states, the existence of alliances between target and supporter states is neglected (Maoz and San-Akca 2012; Khan and Zhaoying 2020). This is mostly the case when one looks at the datasets created to determine the cases of external support. There are two notable datasets that focus on external support. The first one is the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's (UCDP) External Support Dataset (ESD) (ver. 18.1). External support to both the rebel side and the government side of the conflict is coded in the ESD in addition to the coding of states and non-state actors as external supporters between the years of 1975 and 2017 (Meier 2023). In this vein, the ESD covers various dyads that contain external support cases such as state support to states, state support to rebels, rebel support to rebels, and rebel support to states. A notable difference in the ESD in terms of specific support type is intelligence support. The limitations of this dataset, however, are its time coverage and lack of passive/ indirect support.

Second, the Nonstate Armed Groups Dataset (NAGs) (ver. 2015), is an extensive dataset both because of its time coverage (1946-2010) (also, ver. 2024 covering 1946-2019) and because of its detailed support types for relevant triadic cases (San-Akca 2016). The unit of analysis makes it clear for the researchers to explore yearly support by specific supporter states to the specific rebel groups for the relevant target states. It allows distinguishing between intentional and de facto supporters. This is the main reason why the RSD uses the cases covered by the NAGs dataset. Also, the NAGs dataset is currently being expanded to cover non-state support for rebel groups up to 2019. The advantages of the NAGs dataset in comparison to those and the above-mentioned datasets include a broader time frame, the distinction between active/ direct and passive/indirect support, as well as designations of various and specific identities and aims of rebel groups.[2]

The inclusion of passive support matters for the compilation of the RSD because it is crucial to determine how states have been responding to not only the intentional but also the passive/indirect state support for rebels and to account for both coercive and non-coercive target responses. Previous literature treated the de facto support as invisible in the empirical studies with the exception of the NAGs dataset. Furthermore, taking the de facto support seriously theoretically opens the door for taking the rebel groups seriously with their agency since the de facto support indicates the circumstances in which the rebel groups take advantage of a state which then leads to passive external state support.

As another limitation, the external support literature has not engaged with studies of conflict management, or management of interstate crises as well as how external support impacts the international relations of target states. The response dataset, by compiling information about the bilateral relations between target and supporter states, aims to find patterns in target state behavior and provide explanations for coercive and non-coercive responses. Predicting target

2 Also, the Internationalization of Armed Conflicts Dataset (Golubev and Antonova 2019) deals with internal and internationalized-internal armed conflicts. Contrary to this dataset which has a broader understanding of the involvement of third-parties, the RSD focuses particularly on external state support/sponsorship when exploring target state responses rather than interventions that are intentionally executed by foreign states.

state responses is a valuable research pursuit for peaceful coexistence and dispute resolution in interstate relations. The policy implications from this study could help mitigate crises and resolve the existing ones by forecasting the target state's reactions against their counterparts that support rebel groups. With the help of the RSD, this study aims to answer the following unexplored questions:

- Why do some target states respond coercively to state sponsorship while others do not?
- How do state-level (e.g., rivalry, alliance, and regime type) and group-level variables (e.g., rebel identities and objectives) influence target responses to state sponsorship of rebel groups?

The Response to Sponsorship Dataset (RSD) is the first dataset to account for target state behavior against state sponsorship of rebel groups. It shows the foreign relations of target and supporter states with specific reference to the sponsorship behavior. It is possible to look at how a target state does not have a static position when it comes to dealing with the sponsorship behavior of a supporter state through the RSD that is coded yearly for each triad. Target states might be responsive to the sponsorship behavior of a supporter state in the beginning but may not respond to it later for numerous reasons. For instance, there could be a change in the material capabilities of the target state in comparison to the sponsor state which might lead to being less responsive to the threats emanating from state sponsorship. The same conclusion could be arrived at if the relations between the target and the supporter states become more cooperative in time, regarding the external support of rebels. Likewise, target states might become responsive over time when they are non-responsive at first. This could happen if a relative increase in power in favor of the target state occurs or if the supporter state switches from passive support to intentional support of the rebels over time. Additionally, there could be domestic factors or group-level variables to alter the behavior of target states over time.

Theoretically, through the RSD, a typology of target responses against sponsorship could be devised along two dimensions. First, target states may adopt multiple responses in a year to respond to the sponsors ranging from diplomatic, economic, militarized, and domestic to covert responses. Second, the severity of responses could be classified as inaction, coercive, non-coercive, and mixed responses and allows us to understand the tone of target responses toward sponsors. The RSD aims to provide general patterns in target states' responses to state sponsors in order to deal with external support of rebel groups. By doing so, the RSD takes the first step to prospective studies on response effectiveness in the future.

Overview of the Response to Sponsorship Dataset (RSD): Identifying the Target Responses and Coding Procedures

The RSD codes for target responses to state sponsors between 1991 and 2010 (Kınay Kılıç 2024).[3] The time period focuses on after the Cold War because, during the Cold War, mostly intentional support of rebel groups took place (Rauta 2020). That is, principal-agent theory would be applicable during the Cold War to depict the nature of the relationship between the

3 The RSD is available at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/XNU8NO.

rebel groups and supporter states. However, I adopt selection theory and its comprehensive framework to include de facto support provision. With the end of the Cold War, since de facto support has increased, we can observe both intentional and de facto forms of support using selection theory as a novel approach to identify target state reaction against sponsorship. I have chosen the triadic cases from the NAGs dataset using the following three criteria: 1) the rebel group received intentional and/or de facto support from a state supporter, 2) the rebel group received support at least for 1 year, and 3) the starting year of conflict is when the rebel group caused 25 battle-deaths per year. All these criteria signal the increasing costs for target states that make them respond to the sponsorship.

I consider target responses as foreign policy reactions against the sponsoring states. In the RSD, the unit of analysis is a triad year and the dataset contains 3719 observations that include 58 different target countries, 150 different rebel groups, and 102 different supporters between 1991 to 2010. There are 455 different triadic cases. A triad refers to a target state, a rebel group operating against the target state, and a state supporter of the rebel group (e.g., The triad of Angola-UNITA-South Africa in 1991; Angola's responses to South Africa with reference to South Africa's support of the UNITA in 1991).

This study employs the selection theory's definition of state sponsorship. Selection theory distinguishes between the rebel's selection process in which rebel groups select the supporter state to receive support from and the (supporter) state's selection process in which supporter states intentionally provide support to rebel groups (San-Akca 2016). The former is called de facto support while the latter is intentional support. External state support and state sponsorship are used interchangeably in this study. The existing literature has not yet made a conceptually clear-cut distinction between conflict delegation, proxy warfare, sponsorship, and intervention although few studies treat them differently (Salehyan 2010; Karlén et al. 2021). Since less hierarchical forms of assistance (de facto support) are overlooked by delegation, proxy warfare, and intervention frameworks (Karlén et al. 2021), I use external support/ state sponsorship as a concept that depicts both intentional and de facto support provision for rebel groups. Additionally, rebel groups in this study refer to non-state armed groups that include ethnic, religious, insurgent, revolutionary, and terrorist groups with aims of secession, autonomy, regime, or leadership change (San-Akca 2016).

The responses in the RSD are coded using the publications in Nexis Uni. The best source of publication type was "Newswires and Press Releases" for the target responses even though I used other publications such as press releases, country reports, newspapers, news transcripts, web-based publications, news, and aggregate news sources. I also searched for other primary and secondary sources on the bilateral relations of states with reference to the state sponsorship of the respective rebel groups. I included other names of rebel groups when investigating the target responses since sometimes, rebel names that are different from the names in the NAGs dataset were used in sources.

The Dependent Variables: I created the response variable in two different ways that can be used for statistical analyses. Firstly, I coded for *diplomatic, economic, militarized, domestic, covert,* and *no response* as specific categories of target responses. Each of these categories is coded binary. Secondly, the responses of target states are coded based on their severity. Target

states may do nothing (*inaction*), may give *only coercive* or *only non-coercive* responses, or they may use *mixed* responses (both coercive and non-coercive) within a triad-year. Then, I coded the *severity of response* variable that includes these four categories as a nominal variable. As shown in Table 1, the overarching response of target states is conceptualized dichotomously as containing coercive and non-coercive with an aim to terminate sponsorship.

Table 1. Typology of Responses in the Response to Sponsorship Dataset (RSD)

Responses	Coercive	Non-Coercive
Diplomatic	*verbal threats, warnings*	*press releases, demands for extradition, accusations*
Militarized	*threat to use force, bombings, cross-border operations, mobilization*	*bilateral military exercises, military purchases*
Economic	*sanctions, threat to cut economic aid, freezing assets*	*boycott of goods, promise of financial assistance*
Domestic	*parliament passing legislation to authorize cross-border operations*	*public protests of the supporter county, legal arrangements*
Covert	*targeted killings, reconnaissance missions proving illicit activities*	*intelligence sharing, secret meetings*

As for the specific categories of target responses, Table 2 showcases their distribution in the RSD. 43% of all responses are diplomatic, making it the most widely used response, followed by militarized responses (10%), domestic responses (9%), covert responses (8%), and economic responses (4%). The reason why the percentage of total response types does not add up to one hundred (100%) is because there are multiple responses for a single observation for a triad-year.

Table 2. Summary Statistics of Specific Response Categories

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Diplomatic	3,719	0.432	0.495	0	1
Economic	3,719	0.042	0.202	0	1
Militarized	3,719	0.098	0.298	0	1
Domestic	3,719	0.091	0.287	0	1
Covert	3,719	0.079	0.271	0	1
Inaction	3,719	0.510	0.500	0	1

Diplomatic responses include high-level visits, press conferences, agreements, demands without a clear threat, consultations, naming and shaming, putting pressure, rejecting to talk, diplomatic engagements with other states to gather support against sponsor states, designation of sponsorship or accusations, mediations, creation of joint/cooperative task forces or signing military accords against rebel groups, and deportations to name a few examples. Usually, diplomatic responses are non-coercive unless they entail statements of direct threats usually through the speeches of leaders as encountered in the RSD. In essence, diplomatic responses aim to enhance dialogue between the target and supporter states. Target states use diplomatic

responses to clearly state their position and demands regarding the sponsorship and sometimes also accuse the supporter states of assisting rebel groups. For instance, Algeria and Mali in 2009 signed a joint military accord that allowed Algeria to enter in the soils of Mali to fight against the Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) that operated inside Mali (Agence France Presse 2009). This response is coded as diplomatic and it is non-coercive. On the other hand, despite being rare, some diplomatic responses could be coercive if they involve threats. To illustrate, during the October crisis of 1998, Turkish President Süleyman Demirel threatened Syria that if they did not abandon their support for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan*, PKK), Turkey would not hesitate to declare war on Syria (Agence France Presse 1998).

Economic responses could be coercive or non-coercive as well. They are considered coercive when the economy of supporter states is endangered by the threat or the existence of sanctions and embargos. However, economic responses are coded as non-coercive if they include positive economic inducements and incentives, promises of economic cooperation and aid. For example, upon Sierra Leone's requests from the international community, the United Nations (UN) threatened to impose an embargo on Liberia for diamond export and arms and a travel ban for Liberian officials unless they ceased their support for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in 2001 (Paye-Layhey 2001). This form of economic response is regarded as coercive. Conversely, India's supply of military hardware to Myanmar in exchange for cooperation against the anti-Indian rebels inside Myanmar in 2006, is coded as non-coercive (Indo-Asian News Service 2006). Similarly, some fragile sponsoring states, which may provide a conducive environment for rebel groups to operate (in de facto terms), usually receive foreign aid (even sometimes from target states) to increase their state capacity and eventually get rid of the rebel groups (Arioz and Topdag 2024).

Militarized responses are usually considered coercive. They generally signal a counterbalancing move against the sponsorship activities because, in most cases, target states have resorted to militarized responses when the supporter states do not cooperate (in addition to other factors such as rivalry). Cross-border operations such as Colombia's incursions inside Ecuador in 2008 to destroy the camps of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) which caused a lot of tension between the two states (Waisberg 2009), are considered coercive militarized responses. On the other hand, there are rare cases where the target and the sponsor cooperate against rebel groups militarily which then, are coded as non-coercive. For instance, India has given militarized responses to countries like Bhutan and Bangladesh in the forms of border fencing, deployment of troops, and even cross-border operations and training the army of Bhutan to fight the rebel groups (IRNA 2003; Indo-Asian News Service 2010). India provided training for the Royal Bhutanese Army in 2003 before a full-scale military operation launched by Bhutan on anti-Indian rebels that enjoyed Bhutanese soil as a safe haven and used it for camps and training (Hussain 2003). Bangladesh and Bhutan have been cooperative in the efforts of India to remove the rebels from those territories.

Domestic responses include legal and institutional arrangements that take place in target states in reaction to the sponsorship behavior. Examples include border control and immigration restrictions, legal changes to prosecute citizens (e.g., journalists from supporter

states), high defense and security spending, parliamentary decisions to deploy troops, and hiring private security companies and mercenaries. Some societal reactions could also be considered domestic responses such as boycotts of goods belonging to the sponsor states and demands for military action from communities. Except for parliamentary decisions to approve militarized action, domestic responses are coded non-coercive. To exemplify domestic responses, India imposed a night curfew on its borders with Bhutan and Bangladesh in 2000 to avoid the crossing of rebels (Agence France Presse 2000).

Lastly, covert responses refer to covert action and clandestine operations of the target state to influence supporter states (Congressional Research Service 2018). One caveat worth mentioning here is that the RSD could only code the revealed covert information that became public information in the aftermath of its execution and therefore, covert responses may be underrepresented in the dataset relative to other responses. Covert responses are coded coercive when there are violent incidents, such as targeted killings and assassinations because they signal costly consequences of external support for the sponsor states. However, sometimes, target and supporter states cooperate via intelligence sharing or establishing joint intelligence units to collaborate against the rebels. These instances are coded non-coercive. To exemplify a coercive covert response, Mossad used fake passports belonging to other countries to assassinate a Hamas leader in Dubai, which received criticism from both United Arab Emirates and other countries whose passports Mossad used (Deutsche Presse Agentur 2010). Uganda's joint surveillance operation with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to destroy rebel camps in eastern Congo demonstrates a case of non-coercive covert responses (Africa News 2005).

Table 3. The Frequency of the Severity of Target Responses

Severity of Responses	**Freq.**	**Percent**	**Cum.**
Inaction	1,898	51.04	51.04
Non-coercive	1,477	39.71	90.75
Coercive	48	1.29	92.04
Mixed	296	7.96	100.00
Total	**3,719**	**100.00**	

Coercive responses are those that involve direct threats (e.g., threat to/show of/actual use of force, sanctions) from target states whereas non-coercive ones do not include a direct threat toward the supporter states. Table 3 demonstrates the distribution of exclusively coercive and non-coercive responses, mixed responses, and inaction. The biggest portion of observations involves inaction (51%). Exclusively non-coercive responses amount to nearly 40% of all responses whereas exclusively coercive ones comprise nearly 1.3%. As for mixed responses, they account for nearly 8% of all observations. One of the reasons why inaction is so widespread could be because of omitted information bias. To remedy this possible problem, the RSD also utilized sources other than Lexis Uni such as scholarly articles, books, and web searches that provide information on bilateral relations of target and supporter states chronologically. Moreover, one of the reasons why inaction is more frequent could be that target states may prefer inaction so as not to escalate the dispute or conflict with the supporter states. Even the status quo may not be threatening enough to respond to the sponsors. Given

that state sponsorship of rebel groups as a form of indirect dispute or conflict (i.e., proxy warfare) is usually chosen as a foreign policy strategy to avoid direct confrontation (Maoz and San-Akca 2012), the inaction of target states may be plausible in some cases to prevent escalation.

To increase the relevance between the responses of target states and the sponsorship of supporter states, the RSD only includes the responses that are clearly stated as given as a reaction to the sponsorship behavior. That is, I only include the events that specifically refer to the sponsorship behavior of supporter states when coding the target responses. Researchers should also be cognizant of the fact that the RSD codes the responses of target states yearly, and analyzes the foreign policy interactions between target and supporter states corresponding to the support-year. This leads to documenting relatively more immediate responses rather than long-term counterterrorism policies of target states.

New Dataset Applications

Specific support types and coerciveness

In order to explore the impact of different support types, I use logistic regression analysis to test which forms of intentional and de facto support are the best estimates of coercive responses (aggregation of *only coercive and mixed responses*).[4] I use the support types that are coded in the NAGs dataset. In the naïve Model 1, safe haven for members positively and significantly increases the likelihood of observing coercive responses while safe haven for leaders negatively and significantly decreases the likelihood of observing coercive responses. All other forms of intentional support types have a positive association with coercive target responses but their impact is not significant. In the extended model for intentional support (Model 3), I included some control variables (see Appendix B which explains how they are coded). These are the contiguity between target and supporter states, their polity scores to account for regime type, their Gross Domestic Product per capita (GDP/pc) scores, and the relative power of target state vis a vis supporter state. Model 3 demonstrates that in addition to safe haven for members, the existence of training camps also increases the likelihood of coercive responses from target states toward sponsors. Figure 1 shows the predicted probability of coercive target responses increases from nearly 8% to 13% for safe haven for members As for training camps, their existence increases the probability of observing coercive responses from nearly 8% to 15%.

Except for the relative power of the target state, all of the control variables significantly affect the coerciveness of target responses. Contiguity and the GDP/pc of target states increase the likelihood of observing coercive target responses. As polity scores of target and supporter states increase the likelihood of coercive responses decreases. Additionally, as the GDP/pc of supporter states increases, the likelihood of coercive responses decreases. The marginal effects of control variables can be seen in Figure 1 (Appendix C provides the marginal effects of control variables when intentional support is provided for rebel groups).

4 I controlled the time dependence using cubic polynomials and used triad clustered robust standard errors.

Table 4. Intentional versus De facto Support and Coercive Target Responses

VARIABLES	(Intentional) Model 1	(De facto) Model 2	(Intentional) Model 3	(De facto) Model 4
Safe haven for members	1.067***	-0.381	0.670*	-0.944**
	(0.304)	(0.301)	(0.337)	(0.301)
Safe haven for leaders	-0.950*	0.548	-0.786	1.346**
	(0.386)	(0.360)	(0.459)	(0.506)
Offices	0.156	0.0438	0.237	-0.381
	(0.348)	(0.395)	(0.425)	(0.544)
Training camp	0.609	0.345	0.825*	-0.391
	(0.351)	(0.426)	(0.340)	(0.392)
Training	0.210	-0.515	0.720	-0.931
	(0.342)	(0.503)	(0.489)	(0.502)
Weapon & Logistics	0.182	0.0166	0.254	-0.0468
	(0.339)	(0.355)	(0.400)	(0.405)
Financial aid	0.00366	-1.042**	-0.237	-0.396
	(0.375)	(0.370)	(0.401)	(0.328)
Transportation and military advice	0.375	0.101	0.230	0.167
	(0.515)	(0.457)	(0.551)	(0.420)
Troop	0.658		0.273	
	(0.519)		(0.505)	
time	0.0390	-0.0210	0.168	0.157
	(0.109)	(0.110)	(0.143)	(0.146)
time2	-0.00237	0.00649	-0.0117	-0.00838
	(0.0139)	(0.0139)	(0.0171)	(0.0174)
time3	0.000155	-0.000153	0.000368	0.000274
	(0.000498)	(0.000493)	(0.000590)	(0.000600)
Contiguity			1.776***	1.872***
			(0.314)	(0.335)
Relative power of target			-0.00116	-0.00194*
			(0.000747)	(0.000947)
Polity V- target			-0.0161***	-0.0162***
			(0.00427)	(0.00420)
Polity V- supporter			-0.0188***	-0.0164***
			(0.00358)	(0.00395)
GDP/pc- target			0.0604***	0.0488***
			(0.0144)	(0.0127)
GDP/pc- supporter			-0.0440*	-0.0669**
			(0.0196)	(0.0247)
Constant	-2.898***	-2.305***	-5.054***	-4.352***
	(0.266)	(0.253)	(0.431)	(0.409)
Observations	3,719	3,719	3,257	3,257
ll	-1071	-1102	-758.3	-772.0

Robust standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

With regards to the de facto forms of support, in the naïve Model 2, only financial aid significantly and negatively impacts the coerciveness of target responses. In the extended Model 4, (de facto) safe haven for members decreases the likelihood of coercive responses while safe

haven for leaders increases the coerciveness (and its coefficient is quite sizeable). Apart from transportation and military advice, the remaining support types are negatively associated with coercive responses. Control variables show parallel results that are observed in the intentional support types. Figure 2 indicates (de facto provision of) safe haven for members decreased the probability of observing coercive responses from target states. Contrarily, safe haven for leaders increases the predicted probability of target responses from 7% to 18% (Appendix D provides the marginal effects of control variables when de facto support provision exists).

Overall, the results in Table 4 indicate that the distinction between intentional and de facto support matters. Moreover, intentional support positively correlates with coercive responses (except for safe haven for leaders) while de facto support is negatively associated with coerciveness (except for safe haven for leaders & transportation and military advice). The results support earlier studies on the importance of safe haven/sanctuaries (Byman et al. 2001), in terms of increasing rebel defeat (Carter 2012) and increasing rebel capabilities (Sawyer, Cunningham and Reed 2017). Target states are more likely to employ coercive responses toward supporter states that provide safe haven/sanctuaries and this may directly or indirectly cause rebel defeat. Also, increased rebel capabilities through safe haven/sanctuaries may heighten the level of perceived threat by target states and hence, cause coercive responses toward supporter states. Furthermore, the results support that intentional training camp provision may be more important for rebels to achieve favorable conflict outcomes (Keels Benson and Widmeier 2021) as opposed to Byman et al. (2001) who argued that training is less important. Training camps by strengthening rebel capabilities may elevate the perceived threat level of target states and in return, they would be more likely to resort to coercive responses toward sponsors.

Figure 1. Average Marginal Effects (with 95% CIs) of Intentional Forms of Support

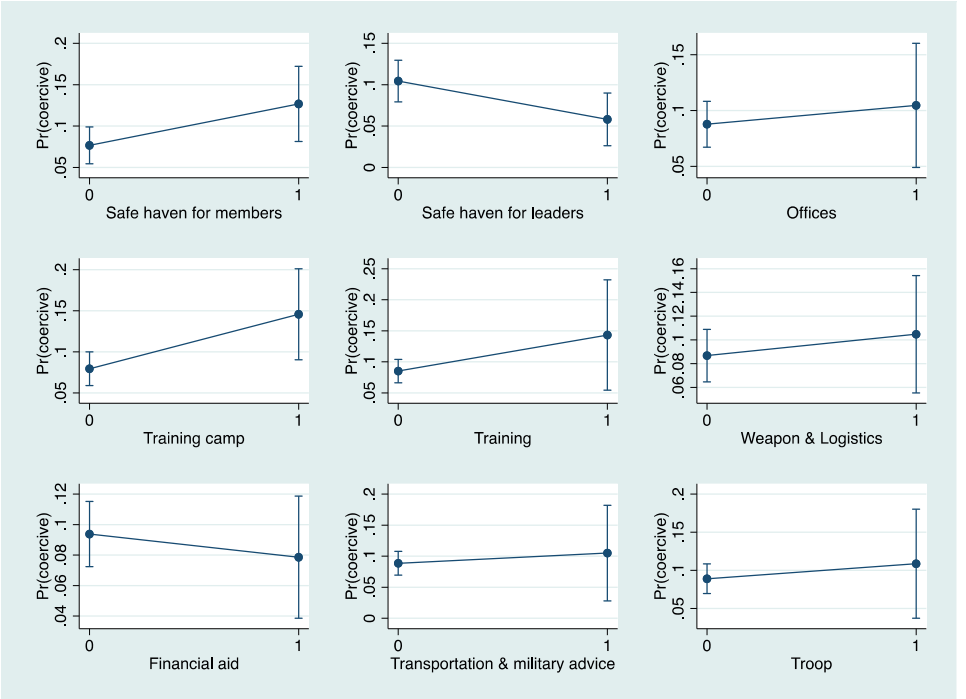
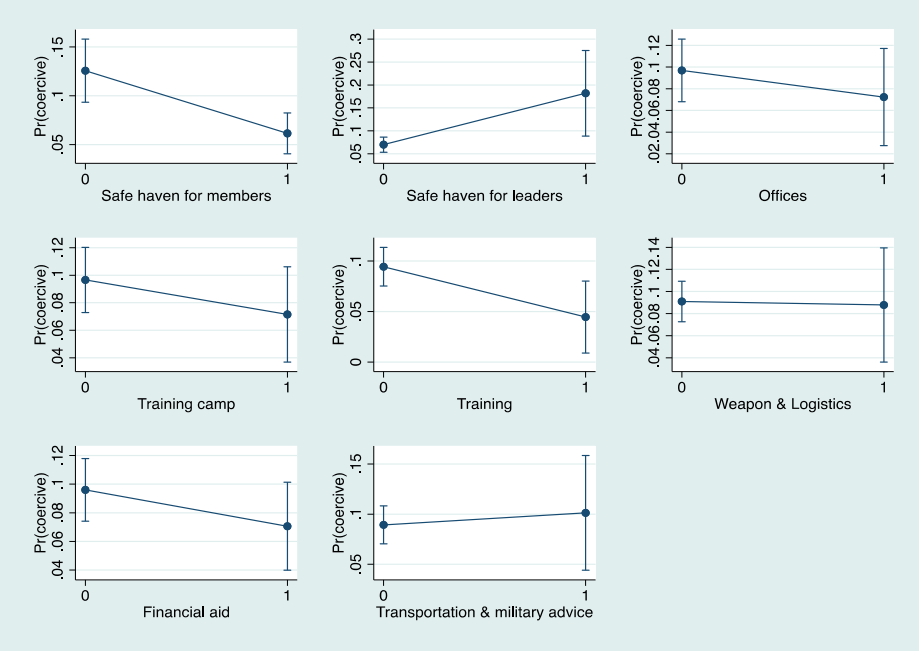


Figure 2. Average Marginal Effects (with 95% CIs) of De facto Forms of Support



Support level and severity of target responses

By looking at the specific intentional support types, San-Akca (2016: 83) argues that support level could be determined as shown in Table 5. She distinguishes between very high, high, moderate, and low levels of support by supporter states to rebel groups. Depending on the level of support, target states' response to supporter states may vary in terms of severity (inaction, coercive, non-coercive, and mixed). Below, Table 5 shows a Likert scale measurement of support type. I argue that support level may also determine the level of perceived threat by target states and thus, may impact their responses. The magnitude of support level goes down from troop and training camp to transportation and offices and so as the level of threat. Since San-Akca makes this classification for only intentional support cases, I use the support level as an independent variable concerning target responses to intentional sponsorship of rebel groups. I test the impact of support level using a multinomial regression model to predict how support level influences the severity of responses by target states. I used robust standard error clustered by triadic cases and to account for time dependence, I used cubic polynomials (see Appendix B which explains how the support level is coded).

Table 5. The Level of Perceived Threat by Target States.

Threat perception of target	Support level/type by the sponsor
Very high	*Very high* (Troop or training camp and/or other support types)
High	*High* (Safe haven to members or weapons and/or other types of support other than troop and training camp)
Moderate	*Moderate* (Financial support or providing safe haven to leaders or training or other types (other than troops, training camp, weapons))
Low	*Low* (Transportation and offices)

Table 6 shows that, in Model 1, when the support level increases from low to very high levels of support, the likelihood of observing "only coercive responses" increases significantly. When the control variables are added in Model 2, the same result holds. Target states are more likely to respond with "only coercive responses" toward state supporters when the support level provided for rebels increases from low to very high levels. These results support the earlier analyses about the importance of some support types over others as they correspond to different degrees of involvement by supporter states. Target states' threat perception is shaped by support level and this reflects on their behavior when responding to the sponsorship. Additionally, among control variables, contiguity increases the severity of responses while relative power only increases the likelihood of non-coercive and coercive responses. Regime type of target states matter as well and more democratic target states are less likely to increase the severity of their responses toward supporter states. Lastly, as the GDP/pc of supporter states increases, the likelihood of observing "the only coercive responses" by target states increases.

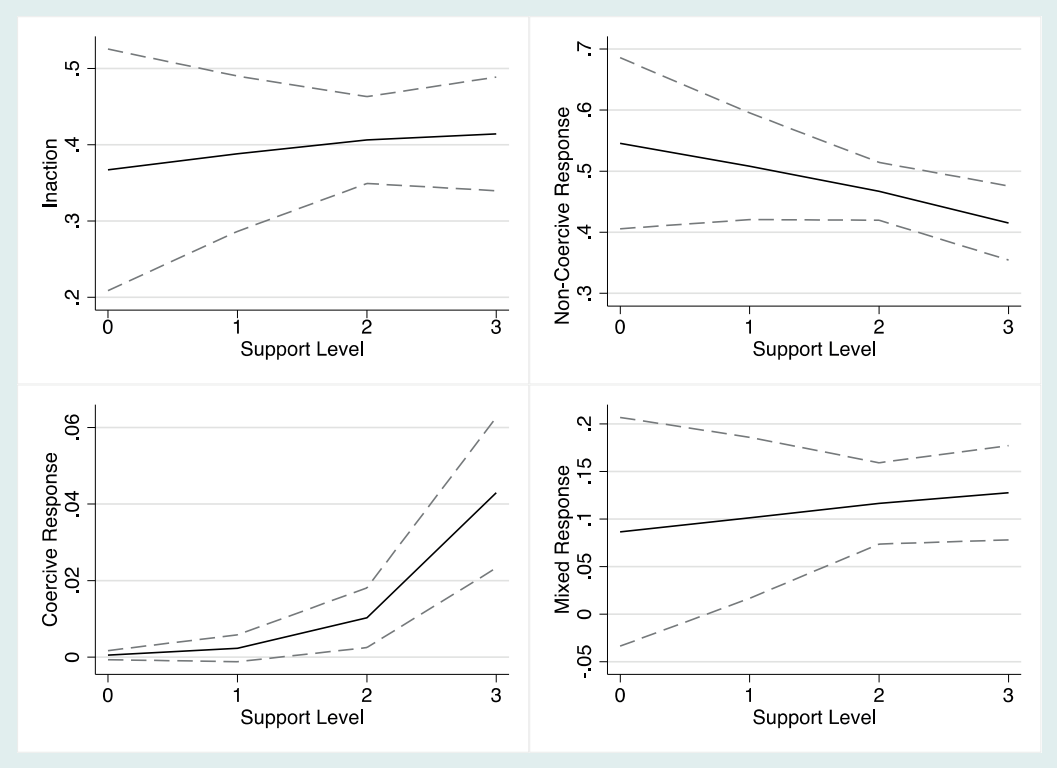
Table 6. The Impact of Support Level on the Severity of Target Responses

VARIABLES	(Non-coercive) Model 1	(Coercive) Model 1	(Mixed) Model 1	(Non-coercive) Model 2	(Coercive) Model 2	(Mixed) Model 2
Support level	-0.0302	1.668***	0.317	-0.130	1.464***	0.114
	(0.127)	(0.503)	(0.370)	(0.146)	(0.439)	(0.374)
Contiguity				0.612*	2.736**	2.018***
				(0.282)	(0.834)	(0.543)
Relative power				0.00107***	0.00147**	-0.00347
				(0.000298)	(0.000470)	(0.00313)
Polity V- target				-0.0111*	-0.0313***	-0.0254***
				(0.00462)	(0.00835)	(0.00652)
Polity V- supporter				0.00595	-0.000240	-0.00404
				(0.00494)	(0.0105)	(0.00653)
GDP/pc target				-0.0123	0.0257	0.0371
				(0.0177)	(0.0383)	(0.0246)
GDP/pc supporter				0.0142	0.0601**	-0.00547
				(0.00944)	(0.0230)	(0.0243)
time	-0.257*	-0.373	0.00201	-0.263	-0.202	0.156
	(0.126)	(0.325)	(0.187)	(0.140)	(0.359)	(0.238)
time2	0.0269	0.0501	-0.00987	0.0325	0.0410	-0.0192
	(0.0183)	(0.0434)	(0.0251)	(0.0195)	(0.0486)	(0.0300)
time3	-0.000700	-0.00164	0.000756	-0.000949	-0.00155	0.000914
	(0.000714)	(0.00159)	(0.00094)	(0.000745)	(0.00184)	(0.00108)
Constant	0.626	-6.845***	-1.970*	0.383	-9.526***	-3.802***
	(0.358)	(1.410)	(0.915)	(0.497)	(1.624)	(1.071)
Observations	1,416	1,416	1,416	1,130	1,130	1,130
ll	-1454	-1454	-1454	-1098	-1098	-1098

Robust standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Figure 3 indicates the average marginal effects of the support level. The predicted probability of observing inaction moves from 36% to 41% when support level increases from low to very high levels. "Only non-coercive responses" decrease from 54% to 41%. As for the probability of "only coercive responses", it increases from 0 to 4%. Finally, mixed responses increase from 8% to 12% when the support level increases.

Figure 3. Average Marginal Effects of Support Level on the Severity of Target Responses



Possible Retaliatory Responses

Some target and supporter states as dyads could be seen as reversed in terms of sponsorship. This could be the result of a sponsorship behavior initiated by a supporter state and in reaction to the sponsorship, a target state might support a rebel group that threatens the supporter state. This kind of response could be called a retaliatory response to the sponsorship of rebels. This could also be understood as "responding in kind" covertly even though this concept is usually used to explain the overt behavior of states using reciprocity during the escalation of conflict and arms races, and provocation in foreign policy response (Leng and Wheeler 1979; Sayrs 1992; Crescenzi, Best and Kwon 2018). To identify the retaliatory response, I looked at the NAGs dataset to see which country was the first supporter state within the dyads that alternate as target and supporter states by turn. If both states were seen as supporting the rebel groups that harmed the other respectively in the same year, I decided that the first intentional support should be counted as the first supporter (since those same support years were differentiated by intentional and de facto support). In Table 7, I report the retaliatory response years of

target states within the period of 1991-2010 after identifying the first supporter state and the retaliating target state from the NAGs dataset.

Table 7. Possible Retaliatory Responses by Target States between 1991-2010

Retaliating Target State	Supporter State	Retaliatory Response Years (intentional)	Retaliatory Response Years (de facto)
Afghanistan	Pakistan	2008-2009	2007-2010
Tajikistan	Afghanistan	1998	-
Afghanistan	USA	2001-2002	2002-2010
Angola	DRC	1996-1997	1996-1997
Bangladesh	India	1995-2010	1993-2010
Myanmar	Bangladesh	-	1991-1994
Burundi	Rwanda	-	1996-2000
Chad	Nigeria	-	2009-2010
Chad	Sudan	2008	2007-2009
DRC	Rwanda	-	1996-2000
DRC	Uganda	-	1996
Djibouti	Ethiopia	-	1993-1999
Sudan	Egypt	1993-1998	-
Eritrea	Sudan	2003-2005	2009
Ethiopia	Somalia	2001-2002	-
Sudan	Ethiopia	1993-1999	1993-1999
Liberia	Guinea	-	2000-2001
Myanmar	India	-	1991-2010
Nepal	India	2001-2010	-
India	Pakistan	2008-2010	-
Iran	Iraq	1991-1996	1991-2010
Iran	Israel	2005-2007	-
Iran	Turkey	1992-2004	-
Iran	USA	2001-2010	-
Turkey	Iraq	-	1995
Israel	Sudan	1991-2004, 2008-2009	-
Liberia	Ivory Coast	2002	2002-2003
Liberia	Sierra Leone	1991-2001	1991-1996
Niger	Nigeria	-	2009-2010
Pakistan	USA	-	2002-2010
UK	USA	-	2001-2010

As seen in Table 7, 31 target states could be identified as giving covert help to rebel groups as a retaliation toward the supporter states. This kind of response (retaliation) could be the extension of proxy warfare between states, or it could be understood as part of a reciprocity approach in foreign relations. For instance, Angola has fought with The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) for nearly two decades and had to deal with the DRC's sponsorship due to their close alliance with the UNITA. Angola assisted the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) to help overthrow Zairian leader, Mobutu Sese Seko whose help to UNITA was essential for these rebels to fight against Angola.

By helping the ADFL, Angola wanted to ensure the elimination of the UNITA bases inside the DRC (Reliefweb 1997). On the other hand, some of the cases above might not be counted as retaliatory responses especially the cases where there is only de facto support present. For instance, even though the US provided de facto support in the forms of money, arms, safe haven, and political pressure to the Irish Republican Army (IRA) despite the criticisms of the United Kingdom (UK) government (Byman, 2005), the de facto support of al-Qaeda in the UK cannot be considered as a retaliation from the UK. Al-Qa'ida chose to operate inside the UK rather than retaliation against the UK government by allowing the rebel presence in its territory since the UK was also threatened by al-Qa'ida activities.

Conclusion

The RSD provides that the responses of target states to rebel sponsorship of foreign states can be understood in two dimensions. Firstly, the severity of responses (inaction, exclusively coercive or non-coercive responses and mixed responses) allows an exhaustive categorization of target responses. Secondly, specific response types (diplomatic, economic, militarized, domestic, and covert responses) provide a comprehensive picture painting the varieties of target state behavior when facing external state support of rebel groups. Contrary to the focus on coercive behavior by earlier studies, the RSD shows that non-coercive responses are seen more as reactions from target states to state sponsors. The RSD demonstrates the distinction between intentional versus de facto support forms as well as why specific forms of support matter when explaining the coerciveness of target responses. Also, the support level impacts how target states respond to state sponsors by toning the severity of their responses.

For the management of interstate crises and conflicts that could stem from state sponsorship of rebel groups, policymakers and analysts should be aware of the determinants of target responses. The RSD provides this opportunity to explore the responses and understand why some target states behave the way they do. The RSD could be used to make additional analyses using other explanatory factors that could influence how target states respond to sponsorship. These factors could vary from external security conditions to domestic factors or rebel attributes. In addition, more ideational and strategic factors could be included via case studies (Vuksanovic 2023) to understand the conditions under which the strategies of target states may vary to influence the sponsoring states.

Future studies could use the RSD together with data about the termination of state sponsorship (Karlén 2017) to identify the effectiveness of different types of responses by target states. By doing so, researchers and policymakers could identify the effective and efficient use of responses. This is particularly significant for promising peaceful resolutions to disputes and conflicts that arise from state sponsorship of rebel groups. Utilizing effective responses that could convince state sponsors to withdraw their support for rebel groups might reduce the likelihood of conflict escalation in interstate relations, thereby contributing to international security. Considering that Turkey has suffered from state sponsorship of rebel groups even by their traditional allies, such as the US support for the PYD (the Syrian offshoot of the PKK) (Mehmetcik, Koluk and Yuksel 2022), studying target responses and devising effective foreign policies towards sponsors are crucial to avoid future regional conflicts.

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