REBEL LEADERS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF REBEL ORGANIZATIONS IN
ARMED INTRASTATE CONFLICT

by

AUSTIN CHALMERS DOCTOR

(Under the Direction of K. Chad Clay)

## Abstract

How do rebel leaders influence the behavior of their organizations within the constraints of the conflict environment? In this project, I highlight the prewar military experiences of rebel leaders as well as their motives for conflict to explain how they shape the structure and cohesion of their armed organizations. In doing so, I demonstrate that accounting for variation in rebel leadership provides important leverage over the micro-foundations of insurgent decision-making. Evidence for the dissertation comes from a mixed-methodological research design. In the first stage, I test the generalizability of my arguments in a series of statistical models, all of which use an original cross-national dataset featuring over 200 rebel leaders from 1989 to 2014. In the second stage, I describe the organizational structure, norms of command, and levels of cohesion that characterized the UNITA insurgency in the Angolan Civil War (1975-2002). Toward this end, I acquired data from a series of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with former UNITA subcommanders and fighters, state military leaders, and non-combatants. This study carries important implication for both theory and practice, demonstrating the import of accounting for individual agency in the anarchic environment of armed intrastate conflict.

INDEX WORDS: Rebel leaders; Rebel groups; Rebel fragmentation; Civil war.

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AUSTIN CHALMERS DOCTOR

University of Georgia

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AUSTIN CHALMERS DOCTOR

Major Professor:    K. Chad Clay

Committee:          Daniel Hill

Amanda Murdie

Andrew Owsiak

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour

Dean of the Graduate School

The University of Georgia

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# Chapter 1

# Setting the Stage

Rebel organizations are not created equal. Insurgents emerge in conflict in various forms and capacities. Some rebel groups are quite small, with only a hundred or so fighters. Others, like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, direct massive political and military campaigns. Some rebel groups maintain a more decentralized system of command, dispersing decision-making to on-the ground unit commanders. Others concentrate decision-making authority to select individuals at the top of the organization. In addition, some rebel organizations enjoy higher levels of cohesion, remaining unified for the duration of a campaign; others are fraught with infighting and fragment into competing armed factions. In short, rebel groups approach insurgency in different ways.

For insurgencies, differences in these organizational characteristics—structural form and degrees of cohesion—vary not just between conflicts, but within them. That is, the rebel groups active in a single conflict are hardly carbon-copies of one another. As more conflicts today feature multiple armed parties than one consolidated rebel organizations, this is a particularly interesting puzzle. The average number of rebel groups fighting in civil wars has increased from eight in 1950 to fourteen in 2010 (Walter 2017). That we observe differences in structure and cohesion in groups acting in the same conflict contexts suggests that structural

factors alone cannot explain how groups are formed and why some remain unified while other fragment into competing factions. Indeed, we have relatively little understanding of the factors that shape rebel organizational structure at all. Speaking to this puzzle, I offer a story about rebel leadership and its influence on the behavior and performance of the organizations which carry their countries and communities into war.

A leader-based approach is well-suited to provide empirical leverage and theoretical clarity over the processes of rebel group management. Generally, recent approaches to rebel leadership and the cohesion or behavior of their organizations share a common theme: leaders mostly serve as faceless conduits, channeling the dominant influence of environmental features.[1] By treating rebel leaders as interchangeable actors, structural theories fall short of leveraging them as sources of explanatory power. In leader-based explanations, Ahlquist and Levi (2011) point out, "The trick is to clarify the relationship between context and the particular attributes and tasks of leaders." This study investigates the microfoundations of rebel structure and fragmentation and offers a novel explanation of how rebel leaders draw on their personal characteristics and experiences to wield independent agency on group-level outcomes and behavior.

As Price (2018) writes, "The organization level of analysis holds the most promise for a proper emphasis on leadership because pleaders play a pivotal role in determining most organizational characteristics" (15). Towards this end, I offer evidence that leaders are powerful actors in the anarchic environment of civil war. In particular, this study demonstrates how rebel leaders draw on their unique repertoire of pre-war experiences to shape the structure of their organizations and maintain cohesion. In addition to offering insight into the process of rebel fragmentation, this study suggests that greater effort should be made to bring leaders back into theoretical and empirical approaches to the dynamics of armed intrastate conflict.

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[1]Notable exceptions include research by Prorok (2016), Tiernay (2015), (Hoover Green 2016), and Cunningham and Sawyer (2019). My theory builds on these studies to demonstrate how rebel leaders' *individual* experiences and characteristics shape the management of armed rebel groups in civil war.

Why do leaders' past experiences matter? I draw on the work by Horowitz, Stam and Ellis (2015) on *state* leaders, which argues, "Background experiences matter in part because they form a mental Rolodex that both citizens and leaders turn to when making strategic decisions....Background experiences represent a pool of lessons learned, shaping a leader's judgement about which strategies are more or less likely to succeed or fail" (10). These shape how leaders form objectives, consider risk, and evaluate the strength of particular strategies. We can generalize across such characteristics to form expectations of how rebel leaders will lead during times of intrastate war. In this dissertation, I focus on those decisions which relate to organizational structure and which, subsequently, affect degrees of organizational cohesion.

## 1.1 The Outcomes

### Organizational Structure

Why study the structural organization of rebel groups? In the literature on rebel organizations, rebel influence on conflict outcomes and dynamics, especially the forms and intensity of violence has taken overwhelming precedent. And this is an important body of work. However, it is too often overlooked that the basis by which commands are translated into action is intimately intertwined with a group's organizational structure. Indeed, "Armed groups cannot survive merely on motivation and incentives alone; they also need an organizational structure that is capable of translating goals into action (De Zeeuw 2008). That is, "A favorable structure does not guarantee the proper execution of a process but is essential for its proper execution—it is necessary but not sufficient" (Sinno 2008: 87). Accordingly, it is incumbent upon a proper theory of rebel leadership—the management of insurgent campaigns—to provide an explanation for variation in how rebel leaders choose to articulate, monitor, and

enforce operational orders.

I define organizational structure as its *common internal processes of decision-making control that frame the interactions between organization members as well as the similarity and insularity of the members* (Knight 1992; Pynchon and Borum 1999). In this project, I focus on three features as critical sources of variation in rebel group structure: centralization, specialization, and size. The literature consistently identifies these factors as essential components of an organization's operational structure (Staniland 2014, 2012; Haer 2015; Kenny 2010; Sinno 2008; Jones 2017), each possessing meaningful and nuanced implications on organizational performance and cohesion.

The empirical record provides ample evidence that organizational structure is directly connected to group behavior and performance. For instance, Jones (2017) points out that the highly centralized military structure of the FLN enabled it to withstand considerable opposition by the French-Algerian state. Heger, Jung and Wong (2012) demonstrate that groups with greater degrees of hierarchy in the chain of command inflict more lethal attacks.

In short, the structure of a rebel organization is one of the important decisions that leaders make during a conflict campaign. It is the responsibility of the rebel leader to form an "organizational model that allows her to command and control her agents and that is sufficiently robust to stand up to opponents, but flexible enough to change with new circumstances (Tarow 1994: 136; Haer 2015 47). Interestingly, little work has been done to connect rebel leaders directly this this essential process. Indeed, we know relatively little at all regarding why rebel groups adopt certain structural forms over others. Speaking to this issue, I offer a leader-based theory of rebel organizational structure, in which a group's structure is not "path determined" by structural endowments, but is shaped by the type of leader at the helm. To make this case, I focus on three dimensions of a rebel group's organizational structure—centralization, specialization, and size—and describe how variation in these factors is shaped by differences in rebel leadership.

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# Fragmentation

Not only are more rebel groups participating in a given conflict today, they are splitting into competing factions once they enter the conflict theater. Recent studies demonstrate the fragmentation is common to today's conflict landscape. Rudloff and Findley (2016) find that fragmentation has occurred in at least 45% of civil wars active since 1989. Likewise, of the 171 Sub-Saharan African rebel groups sampled in his data, Michael Woldemariam (2018) finds that 32% of rebel groups split. Why do rebel organizations fragment into competing factions? Existing studies suggest that rebel fragmentation influences a number of important conflict processes, including conflict duration (Findley and Rudloff 2012), the intensity of conflict violence (Cunningham, Bakke and Seymour 2012), and the durability of post-conflict peace (Rudloff and Findley 2016; Nilsson 2010). As such, understanding why rebel organizations splinter carries important implications for both theory and policy. The fragmentation literature emphasize external pressures that compromise the bond between rebel leaders and their followers, such as peace negotiations, external sponsors, pre-war social networks, and relative military capabilities. The empirical record, however, suggests that experiences of rebel fragmentation vary widely within these contexts.

In this study, I use "fragmentation" to refer to an event in which a segment of a rebel organization formally and collectively exits that rebel organization and establishes a new, independent rebel organization (Woldemariam 2018; Lidow 2016). This same event has also been described as "splintering" by various studies and I use the terms interchangeably. To explain this outcome, I leverage variation in rebel leadership. At its core, the splintering of rebel groups in recent and ongoing insurgencies suggests that fragmentation reflects a belief among senior subcommanders that the group leader is incapable of delivering on their political, military, or material commitments. A motion of no confidence.

## 1.2 Enter Stage Left: The Rebel Leader

I start from the the premise that the differences we observe between the organization and cohesion of rebel groups in not random. Rather, I argue, they reflect strategic choices and differences in the patterns of management attributable to the group leader. As such, trends in the management of rebel organizations can be explained according to the nature of the individual in charge.

Civil wars are started, staffed, perpetuated, and resolved by individuals. Among these individuals, the individual rebel leader is likely to be especially consequential in shaping the trends, dynamics, and outcomes of armed intrastate war. By effective rebel leader, I mean the individual at the head of a rebel organization that holds ultimate decision-making power over critical strategic decisions. Properly conceptualized, rebel leaders are not to be confused with trusted operations subcommanders, group sponsors, or celebrated organizational figureheads. From an organizational perspective, the rebel leader, at minimum, enjoys a structural position of authority. I borrow the Most and Starr (1989) framework of opportunity and willingness to conceptualize rebel leaders as individual decision-makers facing varying environmental constraints, which shape their ability to formulate strategies and select tactics.

To-date, the conflict and security studies have treated rebel leaders mostly as we find them: in the middle of an armed struggle against the state. In bracketing the scope of analysis to this stage of rebel leadership, existing studies have greatly improved our understanding of the management of rebellion, but left a rather immense gap in our understanding of the origins of rebel commanders and their organizations—and the selection process by which some leaders "succeed" and others fail. We cannot examine rebel leaders in an empirical or analytic vacuum; they do not spontaneously materialize as savvy commanders in combat fatigues with manifesto and AK-47 in hand. Rather, most rebel leaders spend their pre-conflict lives as social, military, or political elites. Many have advanced degrees. This project, in part, aims

to expand our understanding of the rebel leader beyond their limited tenure as an insurgent. Spow do these actors draw on their pre-war experiences to wage war *ex post*?

## What Do Rebel Leaders Do?

Rebel leaders play a number of key roles in conflict and, ultimately, act as managers of an insurgency. They are not just figure heads. They must effectively navigate present and anticipated constraints to balance short-term survival with long-term efficacy. I argue that leaders are focal points for strategy, tactics, ideology, inspiration, and managerial guidance. Aggregating the loose collection of existing leadership studies, I argue that rebel leaders, from start to finish, impact conflict outcomes and group dynamics through four key tasks: (1) they offer political or ideological vision (Tse-Tung 1961; Johnston 2012; Lidow 2016), (2) they manage group resources (Hazen 2013; Lichbach 1998b; Weinstein 2007; Mampilly 2011; Shapiro 2013), (3) they lead on the battlefield through strategy and tactics (Jones 2017; Mason 2004; Mitchell 2004; Talmadge 2015; Marten 2007), and (4) they negotiate terms of settlement, ceasefire, and peace (Willingham diss; Prorok 2016; Cunningham and Sawyer 2018).

Leaders who neglect any of these responsibilities only increase the chances of group elimination leading to military or political defeat. Each of these tasks offers a compelling theoretical mechanism that explains how and why leaders might matter in influencing the dynamics and outcomes of intrastate war. Williams (2016) puts it colorfully, "Like wars, recipes don't make themselves—there must be cooks, and it is important to know whether one is dealing with a novice or a master chef" (9). By identifying the critical tasks of leadership, I provide a framework which both policymakers and scholars can use to assess the aptitude of rebel leaders in conflict zones across time and space.

Why focus on rebel leaders? A theoretical and empirical focus on this unit of analysis of-

fers both policy and theoretical contributions. Recent scholarship has identified rebel leaders as a new frontier of conflict and security analysis. On the one hand, studies are increasingly recognizing rebel leaders as meaningful sources of analytic leverage. For instance, Mampilly argues, "The initial preferences of rebel leaders and the interaction of insurgent organizations with a variety of other social and political actors active during the conflict itself" shape organization behavior and outcomes (2011: 80).

For an even longer period, policymakers and practitioners have stressed the importance of insurgent and militant leaders. In justifying leader-centric counterinsurgent tactics, the U.S. Department of Defense writes in the 2006 *National Military Strategy for the War on Terrorism* states, "Leadership provides the following focus for targeting: strategic vision/motivation; operational guidance/direction; and tactical direction" (15).[2] Indeed, the U.S. Army & Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual (FM3-24) stresses that "....leadership is critical to any insurgency. An insurgency is not simply random violence; it is directed and focused violence aimed at achieving a political objective. It requires leadership to provide vision, direction, guidance, coordination, and organizational coherence. Successful insurgent leaders make their cause known to the people and gain popular support. Their key tasks are to break the ties between the people and the government and to establish credibility for their movement. Their education, background, family and social connections, and experiences contribute to their ability to organize and inspire the people who form the insurgency" (1.13). I take this perspective seriously and aims to provide policy and security practitioners with a more complete understanding of exactly how leadership characteristics affect the decisions rebel leaders make with respect to the execution of insurgent warfare. Building from a ground-truth—i.e. leadership matters—I offer a theoretical and empirical tool that will be of use to both academic and policy communities who seek to make sense of the various

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[2]Similarly, as also pointed out by Bryan Price (2018), the 2003 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* reads,"At the top of the structure, the terrorist leadership provides the overall direction and strategy that links all the factors and thereby breathes life into a terror campaign" (6).

organizations that emerge in today's intrastate conflict environments.

## Conceptualizing Differences in Rebel Leadership

Over the past ten years, the conflict and peace literature has increased its attention to the non-state actors involved in intrastate war—rebel organizations, in particular. This is an important development in explanations of conflict dynamics and outcomes. Greatly lacking from academic explanations of rebel group management and behavior, however, is the rebel leader. This is a puzzling omission, given the observed centrality of group leaders to the common processes of insurgency. To fully understand the strategic interactions between armed rebel groups and other conflict actors, it is essential to bring leaders back into our theories and analyses of intrastate war. In this dissertation, I offer a micro-level explanation for the management of armed rebel groups, in which I focus on individual leaders and how they bring their preferences and experience to bear on group formation, structure, and cohesion.

Towards this end, I offer a four-part typology of rebel leadership[3]. What characteristics prompt variation in the type of rebel leader observed at the helm of a rebel campaign? That is, what conditions critically affect a rebel leader's ability to execute their responsibilities effectively? Similar to Horowitz, Stam and Ellis (2015), I argue that a leader's background and personal characteristics directly affect their capacity to execute the responsibilities of leadership and bring their own preferences to bear. I start from the basic assumption that rebel leaders are not a uniform bloc of actors. That is, certain commonalities and distinctions exist across leaders in combat. Some of these characteristics point to the existence of ideal types of rebel leaders. I argue meaningful variation in rebel leader type can be identified at the nexus of two key dimensions: the rebel leader's motivation for conflict and the degree of their military experience.

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[3]I developed this typology with John D. Willingham, my colleague at the University of Georgia. For another application of this conceptual tool, please see Willingham (2017).

The intersection of motivations for conflict and military experience yields four types of rebel leaders: the Ideologue, the Insurgent, the Operator, and the Warlord. These are displayed in Table 2.1. Each leader type produces testable implications for further study. Overall, I theorize that rebel leaders make decisions in discernible patterns, according to their type. That is, I expect the critical dimensions of leadership identified in the section above to affect the management of armed rebel groups in intrastate war.

Table 1.1: Typology of Rebel Leaders in Intrastate War

| | Military Experience | |
|---|---|---|
| **Motivation** | No Military | Military |
| Public Goods | **"The Ideologue"**<br><br>*Examples*: Hassan Nasrallah; Manuel Perez; Abdullah Ocalan | **"The Insurgent"**<br><br>*Examples*: Ahmed Massoud; Doku Umarov; John Garang |
| Private Goods | **"The Operator"**<br><br>*Examples*: Ernest Wamba Dia Wamba; George Boley; Abu Musab al-Zarqawi | **"The Warlord"**<br><br>*Examples*: Johnny Korama; Khadaffy Janjalani; Laurent Nkunda |

These four leader types will carry out many of the the key tasks of rebel leadership in discernible patterns. As a result, we can generate theoretical expectations for how rebel leaders will outcomes of interest. In this project, I connect variation in rebel leader type to observed differences with respect to organizational structure and group cohesion. Of course, this typology can be used to understand other important processes at both the organization and conflict levels, e.g. conflict duration, conflict intensity, the use of violence against civilians, and conflict outcome. This theoretical framework, paired with the Rebel Leaders in Civil War dataset is meant to encourage and enable other academics and practitioners to consider the role of individual agency in situations of armed intrastate conflict.

## 1.3 The Existing Literature

What do existing studies tell us about rebel leaders? In a survey of the conflict literature, we identify four broad theoretical approaches to rebel leadership, with varying levels of corresponding empirical investigation: resource mobilization, principal-agent, leadership change, and leadership ascension. In this section we discuss each approach briefly, highlight their main contributions, and draw out opportunities for future research.

### Literature on the Organization of Rebel Groups

The organization of armed rebel groups has received a great deal of attention from both policy makers and academics in the past ten years. While the study of organizational theory is nothing new, Sinno's (2008: 9) call "to explore how different organizations affect the outcome of conflict" instigated a number of organizational theories in conflict and security studies. These find that the organization of rebel groups has a direct, causal effect on a number of conflict dynamics (Kalyvas 2006; Sinno 2008; Shapiro and Siegel 2012; Christia 2012; Weinstein 2007; Lidow 2016; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006; Reno 2011; Wood 2003; Kenny 2010; Heger, Jung and Wong 2012). Considerably less is known regarding the process by which varying group structures to emerge. Explanations that do exist tend to focus on pre-existing environmental conditions as causal factors (Haer 2015; Staniland 2014; Bates 2008; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). That is, organizational structures of armed rebel groups are expected to be aligned with the "organizational cultures" from which they emerge. Current explanations of rebel group organization can be placed into one of two camps: environmental and strategic. Each camp has made great contributions to our understanding of armed rebellion and intrastate conflict. However, there is significant room for improvement. In particular, we know little about how and why rebel groups come to take different forms under similar environments conditions—and the role rebel leaders play in shaping the observed

variation in group organization.

Environmental theories tend to focus on the pre-war environmental conditions that influence group structure. These explanations stress the pre-existing conditions that precipitate and sustain armed insurgency. For example, statist explanations emphasize the nature and behavior of the state in determining group structure (Bakke, Cunningham and Seymour 2012; Skocpol 1979; Goodwin 2001; Bates 2008). These argue that weak states—and those that issue particularly exclusionary policies—tend to produce more cohesive rebel movements. Alternatively, materialist theories focus on the presence of material resources and their role in shaping group structure and cohesion (Byman 2005; Weinstein 2007; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Kaldor 2013; Haer 2012, 2015). These works claim that the presence of natural rents, patron networks, or generally "lootable" goods tend to produce rebel groups characterized by decentralized systems of command and lower levels of cohesion, were loyalty norms are driven by short-term profits. Finally, socio-institutional theories emphasize the importance of social networks (Staniland 2012, 2014; Wood 2008; Parkinson 2013; Wickham-Crowley 1992). "Insurgents go to war with the networks they have, for better or worse" (Staniland 2014: 20). Group structure, in this argument, is a function of a slowly changing network of political and social relationships.Environmental theories identify important country-specific factors that affect how rebel groups mobilize and take shape. However, these studies fail to explain a key observation: the regular, meaningful variation in group structure in the presence of similar country-level conditions. Accordingly, greater attention is needed to the micro-level factors that shape the decisions made at the group level.

Where environmental explanations focus on country-level conditions that influence group structure, *strategic theories* frame group structure as a strategic decision made by organization leaders. These tend to emphasize combatant interaction and conflict dynamics to explain the organization of rebel campaigns. Sinno (2008) argues that structural choice is one of the "most important strategic decisions that organizational leaders make" (90). As such, group

structure reflects a leader's best effort to position their organization in a place to maximize benefit from available human and material resources. Once decisions are made regarding group structure, they act as a meaningful constraint on future group behavior and position in the conflict environment. Other studies focus on the relationships between rebel groups and foreign sponsors (Salehyan 2010; Lidow 2016). Lidow argues that the organization of rebel groups "depend[s] on the leader's ability to offer incentives to top commanders, which itself depends on the motives of external patrons that supply resources to the group" (2016: 6). Due to this dependent relationship, groups with foreign sponsors may feature a less centralized command structure where a sponsor's preferences differ meaningfully from the rebel leader's. Strategic theories of group structure provide a number of important contributions to the literature. First, a rebel organization does not spontaneously appear at conflict onset. Neither is it "path determined" by the pre-conflict environment. Rather, group structure reflects a strategic decision made by group leaders who act within a set of conflict-specific constraints and conditions. Second, a rebel group's structure can change to accommodate shifts in the conflict environment, albeit slowly.

Equally important to the explanation of group structure is its conceptualization. Conflict and security scholars build on concerted efforts in the organization theory literature in order to define the concept and critical dimensions of rebel group structure. For example, Sinno (2008) conceptualizes group structure as an organizational component, "contained sets of relations among two or more individuals that create incentives to behave, communicate, and reward or punish in a specific way" (27).[4] There is of course, more to an organization than its structure. Group structure, as an easily identified organizational component, provides a means to better understand how leaders' decisions are disseminated, carried out, and enforced in a given organization. In Sinno's subsequent argument, structure influences organizational activities,

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[4]Sinno largely echoes Scott (1981) in defining organizations as "collectivities oriented to the pursuit of relatively specific goals and exhibiting relatively highly formalized social structures" (1981: 22).

which influence organizational performance (Burton and Obel 1984). Staniland (2014, 2012) builds a theory of group structure on a similar foundation. Referencing (Knight 1992), Staniland defines organizations as "collective actors with formal membership boundaries; official, specialized goals; and routinely internal processes of decision-making control, and allocation of resources that structure the interactions between members" (2014: 235). While Staniland offers no clear definition of what "organizational structure" is intended to mean, it can be understood in good faith that he is interested in the "routinely internal processes of decision-making control and allocation of resources". He operationalizes organizational structure according to a group's socio-institutional connections with various social bases, namely through "horizontal" and "vertical" ties. As such, Staniland's operationalization of rebel organizational structure diverges significantly from that offered by Sinno (2008), Jones (2017), and even Shapiro (2013), which tend to focus on structures of command.

In many ways, Staniland's operationalization of group structure is derived more from the mobilizing structures framework developed by social movement theorists (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996) than from organizational theory (Burton and Obel 1984; Scott 1981). In this approach, "Social bases represent a complex blend of agency, structure, and contingency that determines the ideational and social resources insurgent leaders can mobilize for war" (Staniland 2014: 23). To Staniland, the "internal processes" of rebel organizations are intimately bound to the preferences and resources of the social networks from which rebel organizations emerge—to the point that the structure of pre-war social bases offer the optimal operationalization of rebel group organizations in conflict. There are certainly grounds for contention here, but, overall, Staniland offers an important insight previously overlooked in the literature: internal processes of decision-making, control, and incentive are not entirely defined by the systems of command put in place by group leadership.

Overall, both environmental and strategic explanations leave wanting gaps, which fail to identify the factors that explain how diverging group structures emerge from similar envi-

ronments. In fact, leader-based theories of rebel group structure should help to reconcile the important work found in both environmental and strategic studies. Sinno (2008) points out, "Some organizations are shaped by preexisting societal ties while others are developed by political entrepreneurs to maximize their organization's probability of success or to achieve personal gains in areas where societal structures are weak" (30). While rebel leaders are mentioned regularly in most explanations and descriptions of group structure, they are given little causal import. Case in point, Staniland (2014), Shapiro (2013), Lidow (2016), and Haer (2015) discuss rebel leaders explicitly throughout their work. Yet these persons are treated as unitary actors, with little attention to the characteristics that shape how leaders build and manage rebel campaigns. Speaking to this gap, I argue that rebel leaders are not interchangeable; rather, certain personal characteristics should greatly influence the manner in which they mange their campaigns and structure their organizations.

## Literature on Group Fragmentation

Related to the processes of rebel group formation and organization is the manner by which rebel leaders avoid organizational breakdown. Here I use "fragmentation" as a synonym for split(s), referring to the splitting of an organization into two or more separate ones (Tamm 2016).[5] The fragmentation of rebel groups has lasting and meaningful effects a number of conflict outcomes, including conflict severity, duration, and tractability (Wood and Kathman 2015; Cunningham, Bakke and Seymour 2012; Findley and Rudloff 2012; Otto 2017; Atlas and Licklider 1999). The inverse of fragmentation, structural integrity—the extent to which a group maintains a unified presence in the conflict environment? A nascent body of literature, studies on group fragmentation identify a number of factors that shape a rebel group's structural integrity. Current explanations focus on prewar social networks

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[5]For an alternative conceptualization that focuses on fragmentation within a movement of multiple rebel organizations, see Bakke et al. (2012: 266–68).

(Staniland 2012, 2014; Gates 2002), the frequency of a group's military engagements with the state (Kenny 2010; Woldemariam 2016), resource streams (Weinstein 2007), and relative power distributions (Christia 2012).

A portion of the literature on rebel fragmentation, especially earlier studies, focuses on the pre-war social bases or networks from which rebel groups emerge. In a case study analysis of the rebel groups that participated in the most recent Sudanese conflict, Tanner, Tubiana and Griffin (2007) find that the fragmented relationship shared by Sudanese rebel groups embodied and even deepened pre-existing schisms in Sudanese society. Notably, Paul Staniland (2012, 2014) argues, "Insurgents go to war with the networks they have, for better or worse" (20). In his argument, rebel groups are likely to fragment under different constraints and pressures, corresponding with their social networks. For instance, rebel groups with deep ties in a local community will be susceptible to fragmentation when group leaders form working relationships with other communities. For instance, Harakat-i Inquilab-i Islami, a dominant rebel group in the early Afghan Intra-Mujahideen War, lost several splinter factions after the group failed to fully incorporate non-Pashtun members into the command structure (Staniland 2014: 123). Contrary to the Harakat, the Taliban was successful in streamlining diverse local interests into unified national movement. Conversely, Staniland (2014) finds that rebel groups that struggle to form close relationships with a local community are especially likely to fragment in the case of irregular changes in leadership.

Other studies consider the effect of an organization's structural design on the probability of group fragmentation (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Jones 2008; Sinno 2008; Staniland 2012, 2014; Asal, Brown and Dalton 2012; Jones 2017). Sinno (2008) argues that "the management of intense factionalism is one of the more important considerations driving structural choice of organizational leaders" (93). To Sinno, the most important structural decisions relate to issues of centralization, patronage, and redundancy. Echoing these themes, (Asal, Brown and Dalton 2012) find that organizations with a factionalized leadership structure are much

more likely to split than organizations with a hierarchical and centralized leadership structure (96).[6] Jones (2017) points out that a centralized group structure enables group leaders to have high levels of control over operations and resources. This, in turn, allows leaders to mitigate principal agent problems. Jones calculates that 46% of highly centralized rebel organizations claimed a military victory—and 80% can claim a victory or a draw (94). Sinno (2008) also emphasizes the strengths of a hierarchical structure: "Centralized organizations are generally more effective than non-centralized ones, but are more vulnerable to the attempts of rivals to disturb their operations" (89). At the same time, he offers a more balanced appreciation for the merits of decentralization, namely, lower operational and monitoring costs and resilience to leadership turnover.

Another strain in the literature focuses on organizational capacity to explain resilience to fragmentation, or lack thereof. Broadly understood, "organizational capacity" incapsulates group endowments of material or human resources (Day 2017; Weinstein 2007), popular support (Panwar 2017), and military capability (Christia 2012; Woldemariam 2016; Kenny 2010), and geographic proximity (Gates 2002; Christia 2012). Military action is expensive. When resource streams dry up, it is inevitable that groups will collapse. This is especially true of groups staffed by "consumers", who instigate conflict in order to profit off of the anarchic environment (Weinstein 2007). Military capability should also matter a great deal; rebel fighters are not likely to risk the immense costs of war as members of an organization that cannot credibly signal a meaningful likelihood of achieving victory. Of course, mili-

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[6](Staniland 2014, 2012) also finds evidence that group structure affects its propensity for fragmentation. As discussed earlier in the text, Staniland conceptualizes group structure according to slightly different dimensions—what he calls horizontal and vertical ties. In this socio-institutional framework, horizontal ties are the network connections that link people across space, formed between elites drawn from beyond a single social and geographic locale. These connections make collective action possible between like-minded elites at the regional or national level. Vertical ties are more intimate connections of trust shared between group elites and local communities. These can take a number of forms, including: family connections, tribal membership, active welfare programs, or physical recruitment stations. According to Staniland, groups will fragment under different pressures corresponding with the to extent to which they feature horizontal and/or vertical connections.

tary capability is often endogenous to the strategic exchange between combatants. Case in point, Kenny (2010) and Woldemariam (2016, 2011) find that increases in combat with state forces actually increases the structural integrity of rebel organizations—when victory is achieved. However, military loses and/or inactivity tend to provide grounds for organizational breakdown. It is evident that static measures of group capability can only get us so far to a complete explanation of rebel fragmentation. The strategic interaction between conflict actors—the state, rebel group(s), and noncombatants—ultimately shapes how group capabilities translate to group viability. Studies on rebel fragmentation that focus on group capability and performance offer important insights. In particular, they point to difficult task faced by rebel leaders in balancing the means to wage war, the organizational framework to carry out an efficient and effective military camp, and the consolidation of operational control.

Recently, scholars have considered the effects of state sponsorship on rebel group structural integrity. Importantly, state sponsorship is conceptualized beyond the material resources they provide to group leaders. As such, some studies find that foreign sponsorship can be a double-edged sword. While a foreign state sponsor may bolster a rebel group's military capabilities (Sinno 2008: 34), it can also encourage challenges to group leadership. Sponsors are inevitably concerned with agency slack, that is, "independent action by an [rebel leader] that is undesired by the [sponsor]" (Tamm 2016: 601). Accordingly, (Tamm 2016) finds that foreign sponsors are likely to use cash allowances to punish rebel leaders for undesirable behavior by giving it to their internal group rival. In this way, state sponsorship can result in a higher propensity for fragmentation. Lidow (2011, 2016) finds that the effect of foreign sponsorship is also contingent on the nature of the group sponsor. Lidow argues that when state "patrons" support a rebel campaign to boost their bargaining capacity in international relations, they tend to provide relatively little financing and work with weak rebel leaders.[7] As a result, these rebel groups are actually more prone to factionalization

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[7]For instance, some sponsors support rebel leaders simply because an opportunity to destabilize rival

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than rebels without state support. By contrast, "patrons with preferences that align with those of the rebels, such as diaspora communities, tend to support more trustworthy leaders and provide greater access to financial resources" (256). These rebel groups tend to be enjoy higher levels of structural integrity.

Another set of studies consider the process of fragmentation through a different unit of analysis: insurgent *movements*. Rebel movements are sets of active rebel organizations mobilized around a collective identity in pursuit of particular interests related to this identity in a fundamental way Mosinger (2017); Cunningham, Bakke and Seymour (2012); Bakke, Cunningham and Seymour (2012); McLauchlin and Pearlman (2012); Dowd (2015); Akcinaroglu (2012); Atlas and Licklider (1999). These studies seek to explain why rebel groups with similar objectives choose to operate competitively—and how this dynamic affects conflict outcomes. Generally, this literature points to the causal roles of horizontal grievances and regime capacity in influencing the probability of movement fragmentation. Higher levels of movement fragmentation are associated with prolonged conflict, higher levels of violence, and conflict recurrence following settlement. While such studies make important contributions to the broader story of civil conflict, we should expect explanations of group fragmentation to identify different sets of casual mechanisms. Analyses of fragmentation in rebel movements and rebel organizations will inevitable involve many of the same predictors, we must be especially careful not to blur conceptual lines.

Kenny (2010) makes an effort to address a common point of ambiguity. Where existing studies tend to conflate the dynamics of group cohesion and structural integrity, Kenny urges conceptual clarity. He "retain[s] the term cohesion....to mean 'the prevalence of internal conditions which make effective military operations difficult, if not, in some cases, impossible. These conditions are desertion, mutiny, assassination of leaders, and other factors, such as drug usage, which destroy discipline and combat effectiveness' ". Conversely, Kenny "label[s]

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regimes presents itself (Byman et al. 2001).

the property of an organization remaining unified, structural integrity. The opposite of structural integrity can be termed fragmentation. It refers to the splitting of an organization into two or more separate organizations. It is distinct from disintegration, which refers only to individual or group dissension or desertion" (538). The need for conceptual clarity is also recognized by Bakke, Cunningham and Seymour (2012), who point out that "valid concepts are the starting point for sound theories, yet research on fragmentation in civil wars has reached little consensus when it comes to this first step in theory building. This matters both because our assessments of how internally divided movements are rely on the indicators we use to measure fragmentation, and because a focus on certain dimensions of the concept draws our attention to some questions while blinding us to others" (266). Mostly, studies of group cohesion are, in fact, concerned with structural integrity.

The literature on rebel group fragmentation is relatively young, with issues of conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement still in development. That being said, a number of excellent studies have put the research agenda on a strong footing. Group fragmentation is deeply connected to the strategic exchange between conflict actors, so much so that it can only be accurately described an outcome endogenous to conflict and organizational dynamics. A rebel group's structural integrity reflects decisions made by group leaders with respect to organizational design, resource allocation, and military strategy. It also is subject to the nature of the social networks from which rebel groups emerge. Accordingly, leader-based explanations of group fragmentation must clarify how different leader types are related to issues of military defeat, foreign sponsorship, and interpersonal networks. In addition, some effort should be taken to incorporate the capabilities and tactics of other state and non-state actors in the conflict environment.

## Literature on Rebel Leadership

Finally, given the focal point of this project, it is worthwhile to evaluate the current treatment of rebel leaders in the conflict and security literature. Over the past fifteen years, the mention and study of rebel leaders has increased (Marten 2007; Mason 2004; Weinstein 2007; Prorok 2016). Generally, approaches to rebel leaders can be grouped into four broad categories: resource mobilization, principal-agent, leadership change, and leader ascension studies. In this section, I consider the content, strengths, and shortcomings of each approach. I also provide, by way of comparison, a glance at the most recent literature on leaders in interstate war. I discuss each approach, highlight their main contributions, and draw out opportunities for future research. Overall, this survey of the literature reveals that current explanations, which leverage varying units of analysis to explain conflict dynamics and outcomes, overshadow the power of agency in favor of path-determining structural arrangements. Needed is a more developed investigation of the role that individual agency plays in shaping the processes and outcomes of armed intrastate conflict.

### Resource Mobilization

The resource mobilization framework—originating in the social movement literature—offers useful tools of inquiry that many conflict scholars have incorporated into theories of insurgency (Tilly 1978; Jenkins 1983; Tarrow 1998; McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow 2001; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Popkin 1979; Scott 1976). Generally, resource mobilization theories emphasize resource and organizational capabilities to explain mobilization in social movements. In particular, resources are "factors in the environment that visibly and proximately open up the prospect of success" (Tarrow 2011: 164). Many of these studies are also quick to point to the critical role of dissent leaders and "issue entrepreneurs" in initiating collective action by capitalizing on structural opportunities. As such, it is clear why many of the earliest

mentions of rebel leaders in the conflict literature appropriate the themes of social movement studies.

Resource mobilization approaches to rebel leaders in conflict studies can be found in some of the most influential works in the discipline (Weinstein 2007; Mason 2004; Staniland 2014). Mason (2004) puts it succinctly, "More critical for revolution than the level of grievance in society is the presence of revolutionary leaders who can overcome the collective action problem by mobilizing the human and material resources necessary to mount a viable challenge to the state" (40). Similarly, Weinstein (2007) gives a great deal of attention to insurgent leaders. On the one hand, Weinstein restricts the causal agency of leaders in the management of insurgent groups—focusing instead on the deterministic effects of resource endowments and constraints. On the other hand, Weinstein emphasizes rebel leaders as central actors to many of the processes of insurgency: recruitment, agenda setting, training, and organization building (2007: 136-138). This reflects a consistent theme in resource mobilization approaches to rebel leaders, in which they serve as faceless conduits, channeling the dominant influence of environmental features.

Resource mobilization theories of rebel leadership make two contributions to our understanding of rebel leadership. First, leadership plays a critical role in overcoming collective action problems and building robust insurgent campaigns. Second, leaders make decisions according, in part, to their environmental constraints. Like the rest of us, rebel leaders must play the cards they're dealt. Among those cards, however, are varying capacities for leadership; all rebel leaders are not created equal. As such, by treating leaders as an interchangeable set of actors, existing resource mobilization studies expose a compelling puzzle and gap in the literature: are certain leaders better equipped to mobilize organizations that others? Indeed, I argue, "the difference between opportunity and success is probably the best location to continue the examination of leadership in collective activity and to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of revolution?" (Van Belle 1996: 130).

## Leaders As Principals

Other conflict studies incorporate rebel leaders in a principal-agent framework. Principal-agent theories of political behavior recognize and directly model the inevitable informational asymmetries that characterize the relationship between a principal and their agents (Moe 1984; Kiewit and McCubbins 1991). While the principal is formally in a position of power, principal-agent logic holds that agents' superior information and self-interest result in inevitable lack of principal control (Butler, Gluch and Mitchell 2007). "There is almost always some conflict between those who delegate authority and the agents to whom they delegate it" (Kiewiet & McCubbins 1991: 5). Therefore, principal-agent studies must demonstrate how principals may overcome this dilemma—or why they will fail to do so. The principal-agent theoretical framework has become a common tool of analysis in political inquiry (Miller 2005).

Applications of the principal-agent framework in conflict studies tend to focus on two important processes: the victimization of non-combatants by rebel organizations (Mitchell 2004; Haer 2015; Lidow 2016; Hovil and Werker 2005; Salehyan, Siroky and Wood 2014) and the recruitment of fighters (Gates 2002; Jones 2017). The former set of studies finds that rebel leaders with foreign sponsors—especially non-democratic sponsors—or access to "lootable" goods are less beholden to local populations and are more likely to allow group members to inflict violence against non-combatants. The latter set of studies finds that rebel leaders take great pains to avoid recruiting the wrong ?type? of recruit, i.e. one with insufficient military skills, opposing objectives, or differing tactical preferences. To mitigate this risk, leaders can take a number of measures, namely: ex ante screening and ex post monitoring. For instance, they may choose to increase the cost of recruitment by requiring aspiring fighters to undergo extensive ideological and military training. Group leaders can also choose to recruit from a more homogenous social base defined by a common group identity or geographic proximity, as

these factors should increase the cost of defection and are likely to be associated with shared preferences (Gates 2002). Alternatively, leaders can make defection by recruits incredible costly by inflicting severe punishments on those who do not comply (Arjona 2016).

Like resource mobilization approaches, principal-agent models conceptualize rebel leaders as a set of interchangeable, amorphous persons; leaders only by nature of their organizational position. These studies make an important step forward by giving rebel leaders a causal role in shaping group outcomes. Rather than merely placing leaders as way stations for the effects of structural conditions on group dynamics, principal-agent studies place rebel leaders front and center. It seems intuitive to assume, however, that leaders will mitigate the risks of agency loss differently, according to their beliefs, strategic objectives, and capacities for leadership. As such, principal-agent approaches to rebel leaders only get us halfway to a complete micro-level theory of rebel group management.

**Leadership Removal**

Until recently, the investigation of rebel leaders and their effects on conflict processes was limited to conceptual and theoretical . A nascent body of literature has incorporated rebel leaders not only theoretical stories of explanation, but directly into empirical analyses. Of these, the literature on rebel decapitation is the most developed. Decapitation studies investigate the effects of leadership change—especially targeted assassination—on group and conflict outcomes. Do high-value targeting counterinsurgency tactics work? What happens when rebel groups take on new management? These offer mixed evidence for the effectiveness of targeted counterinsurgent tactics.

On one hand, Jordan (2009, 2014) finds that the killing of militant leaders carries little effect on group operations. In particular, militant organizations that feature bureaucratic forms of organization or substantial levels of communal support are more likely to survive at-

tacks on their leadership than those that do not.[8] On the other hand, a number of studies find evidence that leadership removal tactics can be effective. Tiernay (2015) finds that when a rebel leader is captured or killed, wars are 398 percent more likely to end. Similarly, Johnston (2012) suggests that leadership decapitation increases the chances of war termination and the probability of government victory. Moreover, it reduces the intensity of militant violence and the frequency of insurgent attacks in the immediate aftermath of a successful targeted killing. Bryan Price (2018) argues high-value targeting tactics are effective at shortening the lifespan of militant groups. In addition, this study finds that decapitation tactics are especially successful when they target leaders of clandestine, values-based militant groups as these organizations find it more difficult to replace their leadership. In particular, this finding demonstrates that decapitation tactics often have their intended effect in the long-term—the elimination of a militant group—though they may have undesirable effects in the immediate aftermath of a leader's removal, e.g. increases in civilian targeting.

Leadership targeting studies make an important contribution to the conflict literature and the growing body of work on rebel leadership. Notably, these studies diverge from past approaches to address a question of both theoretical and empirical significance: to what extent is the leader essential to the continued viability of a militant organization? By focusing on this issue, leadership targeting studies make an important contribution to the conflict literature and the growing body of work on rebel leadership. Notably, these studies diverge from past approaches to address a question of both theoretical and empirical significance: to what extent is the leader essential to the continued viability of a militant organization? By focusing on this issue, leadership targeting studies offer a more direct test of a basic, but core assumption: rebel leaders matter. The contradicting results in this literature highlight the need for a more pointed discussion about how research design may

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[8]Pape (1996) similarly argues that a tactical focus on killing of militant leadership falls short of offering long-term gains for three reasons: it is hard to find individuals and kill them, the death of a leader during war often brings less policy change than is expected, and, in most states, succession is unpredictable.

affect assessments of tactical success with respect to counterinsurgency efforts. One plausible reason for the diverging evidence is that the excellent works by Jordan, Johnston, Tiernay, and Price leverage unique units of analysis and diverging methods of case selection to draw inference about a single outcome. As conflict scholars continue to investigate empirically the import of rebel leadership—adding a micro-level stratum to a subfield already well-stocked with higher level explanations—it will be especially critical that these emphasize the scope of their analysis and, in cases in which results contradict existing explanations, discuss when this may be a function of case selection and/or the selected unit of analysis.

## Leadership Ascension

Most recently, scholars have begun to investigate whether the nature of leadership ascension—the process by which they come to positions of leadership—influences group behavior and conflict outcomes. In other words, does the process or timing by which a leader comes to power affect how they make decisions? This is a fledgling body of work. In a pair of related studies, Prorok (2016, 2018) explains how rebel leaders' degree of personal responsibility for conflict connects to observed differences in conflict outcomes. Prorok finds rebel leaders who are responsible for initiating conflict—those in positions of authority at conflict onset—are less likely to settle peacefully (2016) and more likely to prolong conflict (2018) relative to those who step into positions of power after the conflict has begun. These sttudies have important theoretical and policy implications, but Prorok's conceptualization of rebel leaders is somewhat superficial. Indeed, Prorok's analysis largely focuses on when a leader comes to power, not who is leading. In another study, Cunningham and Sawyer (2018) argue that the process by which individuals are selected into positions of rebel leadership has lasting effects on the timing of peace negotiations. The authors demonstrate that leaders who are elected or appointed to power by fellow group members "get to the negotiating table faster" than leaders coming to power in other ways, such as merging with other active rebel groups or

forming a splinter faction. Moreover, the election of a rebel group leader has a particularly strong and positive effect on the chance of getting to the bargaining table at all. Building on these studies, this project will go deeper, highlighting the individual leader, their past experiences, and their personal capacities for leadership.

**Leaders in Interstate War**

Finally, it is useful to consider how leaders are examined and conceptualized in studies of *interstate* war. The literature on state leaders in interstate war offers useful points of comparison to assess the strength and clarity of current theories of rebel leaders in intrastate conflict settings. Here, we examine two recent works that demonstrate the utility that can be gained from leader-based theories of conflict.

Chiozza and Goemans (2011) offer a formal explanation of observed variation in outcomes of peace and war. They find that institutional provisions for leadership turnover and a leader?s expected conflict outcome—especially in the case of military defeat—influences their decision to engage in interstate conflict. In short, when institutions lack the capacity to credibly protect a leader after irregular turnovers, leaders facing a forceful ouster may rationally decide to "fight for survival", determining that the costs of war are equal to or less than the costs of expulsion should they fail. This study, reflective of many works in the discipline, offers a compelling decision-making model, but falls short of offering a complete theory of leadership, focusing instead on institutional arrangements and constraints to explain leader behavior.

Most recently, Stam, Ellis, and Horowitz (2015) speak to this wanting gap. In Why Leaders Fight, they argue that state leaders are likely to be influenced by past experiences when making decisions related to conflict. These experiences condition a leader's capacity for risk and "sense of personal efficacy," particularly with respect to the use of force (2015: 33). The authors find that previous military experience, prior rebel experience, age, and

education all shape leaders' attitudes toward risk and the use of force. In doing so, they make an important and innovative departure from previous approaches, finding evidence that leaders' decisions are constrained by their environment, but not determined by it. That is, leaders are capable of wielding independent effects on conflict outcomes, and these effects can be generalized according to leadership traits.

The current treatment of rebel leaders in the conflict literature reveals a need for greater attention to the persons who fill leadership roles and the factors that affect how they make decisions. The intrastate conflict environment is marked by partial anarchy, in which competing organizations offer alternative systems of rule (Mampilly 2011; Lidow 2016). In this setting, rebel leaders are more than organizational hood ornaments. To the contrary, they serve as critical sources of direction and incentive. In the following section, we describe the persons who become rebel leaders, the responsibilities they adopt in the management of rebel campaigns, and the characteristics that are likely to influence how they execute those responsibilities.

Attention to rebel leaders in the conflict and security literature is greatly increasing—particularly through the use of large-N, cross-national studies. Yet the conceptualization of the persons and tasks of leadership vary greatly throughout the literature. Accordingly, it is essential that the persons and responsibilities of rebel leadership be properly conceptualized. Else, as the fever to evaluate these actors heightens, we run the risks of miscomparing, misidentifying, and, producing theories and policy recommendations that speak across one another (Sartori 1991; Geddes 2003). Therefore, I turn to two critical questions: who are rebel leaders and what do they do? Today, the conflict and security literature treats rebel leaders as meaningful actors in the intrastate conflict environment, but conceptualizes them as a unitary bloc of actors. I see this as a disturbing trend. Speaking to this issue, I propose a simultaneously radical and intuitive thesis: rebel leaders embedded in similar environmental settings will make decisions in different patterns according to their personal characteristics

and experiences.

## 1.4   The Argument

Two research questions motivate and guide this dissertation: (1) do different rebel leader types structure their organizations in unique and corresponding patterns; and (2) under what conditions are rebel leaders more likely to suffer group fragmentation, and does this vary by leader type? By addressing these empirical puzzles in succession, I endeavor to tell the story of insurgent management, centered on a common unit of analysis—the rebel leader.

Armed conflict does not emerge from a vacuum in isolation but from a fervent process of political contention. It is forged by people and tempered by context. Some people, inevitably, shape this process more than others. I argue that a focus on rebel leaders—the individuals who mobilize and manage insurgent forces—offer potential tremendous insight into the behavior and viability of armed rebel groups in conflict settings. Indeed, if leaders are central to the process of armed intrastate conflict, as I argue here, then we should be able to trace their influence from the earliest stages of mobilization to the firing of the first bullets to the termination of the conflict. The starting point for this dissertation is the observation that insurgency "does not occur spontaneously"; rather, it is ignited by dissent elites Mason (2004). Accordingly, instead of adding another variable to the list of known correlates with conflict onset, this dissertation takes an important step and explains how rebel entrepreneurs interact with their environments to mobilize military campaigns against the state. Civil wars rarely break out in non-contentious environments; rather, intrastate war is often embedded in larger "cycles of contention" that display violent and nonviolent manifestations of unrest (Florea 2017; Tarrow 2007). At the same time, in select cases, conflict seems to spark overnight. It may be that, by focusing on leadership, we can acquire a more complete understanding of the processes that lead from peace to war—and back again.

My argument is straight-forward: rebel leaders build and lead their organizations in generalizable patterns according to their personal characteristics. More specifically, the decisions rebel leaders make with respect to group organization, strategy, and tactics are, in part, a function of two factors: the leader's motivation for conflict and prior military experience. In fact, the intersection of these critical dimensions reveals the existence of four ideal rebel leader types—the Ideologue, the Insurgent, the Operator, and the Warlord.[9] In managing their insurgent organizations, rebel leaders will navigate similar environmental constraints according to their type. For the purposes of testing my argument, I focus on two "snapshots", or critical stages, in the management of armed rebel organizations: organizational structure and organizational cohesion. If my argument is incorrect, we will observe no variation in these outcomes associated with variation in leader type.

## 1.5   Research Design

To test the hypotheses proposed in this dissertation, I prescribe a mixed methods analysis, complementing my quantitative analyses with an in-depth case study of the UNITA insurgency and the Angolan Civil War. Despite the attraction of statistical methods for the analysis of intrastate war dynamics, without qualitative information it is difficult to interpret the results and identify where incongruities or ambiguities lie in the statistical tests. Given the innovative conceptualization and unprecedented focus on rebel leaders that underpins this dissertation project, a mixed methods analysis is especially appropriate. My proposed research design provides the means to explore the generalizability of the specified theoretical expectations and the plausibility of the mechanisms supposed to be driving the expected outcomes. Indeed, I am convinced—as Thaler (2017) writes—that "mixed methods studies

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[9]This dissertation project builds on a pre-existing research agenda which offers an original conceptualization of rebel leaders and evaluates the impact of variation in rebel leader type on the organization and behavior of armed rebel groups in intrastate conflict (Willingham 2017; Doctor and Willingham 2017).

of violence and conflict give us as social scientists the opportunity to conduct research that both satisfies the criteria of social scientific inquiry and provides more useful and complete information for policy makers and practitioners" (71).

To conduct the statistical components of this analysis, I make use of an original data collection effort. The Rebel Leaders in Civil War dataset (RLCW) identifies and describes 207 rebel leaders in 158 rebel groups across 65 conflicts from 1989 to 2014 (Doctor and Willingham 2017). To my knowledge, it is the first data project of its kind. RLCW, necessary for the completion of this dissertation, is the product of a three year effort involving two principal directors and a team of nearly 50 coding assistants. I test the effects of variation in leadership on the probability of key differences in a group's structure—i.e. centralization, size, and specialization—and a group's vulnerability to fragmentation. Of course, these data are not only important for testing the hypotheses presented in this dissertation. Overall, RLCW is meant to serve as a public good for years to come, to aid scholars as they continue to develop micro-level explanations of conflict dynamics.

To illuminate the mechanisms I describe in theory but do not test directly in the statistical analysis, I acquire qualitative data from more than 30 interviews and focus groups with former rebels in Angola as well as other primary and secondary sources. This information substantiates a case study analysis of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), the dominant rebel group in the Angolan Civil War (1975–2002). UNITA and the Angolan conflict offers an ideal case for qualitative analysis. I code Jonas Savimbi as an Insurgent-type rebel leader. According to the RLCW data, UNITA was highly centralized, featured numerous specialized wings, and mobilized a sizable fighting force. Moreover, with respect to rebel cohesion and fragmentation, many structural theories predict that UNITA would have likely splintered into competing factions. Yet, UNITA remained cohesive until its defeat in 2002. Accordingly, UNITA offers a unique opportunity to evaluate the theoretical mechanisms described in this proposal and to describe how leadership may either exacerbate

or mitigate threats to an insurgency's viability.

## 1.6 Scope and Limitations

Necessarily, this study is limited in its empirical scope. First, I bracket the theoretical and empirical scope of this project to the study of rebel leadership in armed intrastate conflict. This means that I view rebel leaders just as we find them: at war. Undoubtedly, the process of rebel leadership begins well before the first bullets are fired. The recruitment of troops, the establishing of partnerships and allies within and across state borders, the acquisition of arms, and the formulation of a political and military strategy are all tasks begun by the savvy rebel leader before mounting an armed and violent challenge to the incumbent state.[10] And this process merits its own dissertation. Second, and relatedly, I focus on how rebel leaders shape the organizational structure and cohesion of their organizations during war. This scope limitation has an unfortunate implication, we only observe and study those leaders who are successful in mounting a campaign viable enough to be recognized by the common data programs on armed non-state actors, those who generate a conflict of sufficient intensity to be registered. A more thorough analysis of this pre-war, twilight stage of armed conflict would consider the individuals behind both successful and failed rebel mobilizations. As such, I do not aim to explain the selection process by which certain rebel entrepreneurs "make it" while others do not. Instead, I focus on that subset of rebel entrepreneurs who emerge as bonafide rebel leaders.

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[10]Kent Layne Oots (1989: 143) argues, "The formation of a terrorist organization, like the formation of any other political organization, depends on the leadership's ability to recruit and retain a committed membership."

## 1.7  Overview

Ultimately, this dissertation project tells a story of insurgency in which rebel leaders play a starring role. The theory and analysis contained herein make a number of important contributions to the literature on armed rebel organizations, with important implications for both scholars and policymakers. In this dissertation, I make the case for an innovative approach, conceptualizing rebel leaders as critical sources of agency in armed rebel organizations. This dissertation follows the following order of operations.

In Chapter Two, I conceptualize rebel leadership and present a novel typology of rebel leaders, reconceptualizing the roles these actors adopt in the management of armed rebel groups. Chapter Three outlines two connected, but unique theories of rebel leaders as they relate to the processes of group formation, organization, and management. In doing so, I tell a sequential story of rebel leaders and group management, highlighting two "snapshots" of that process: structure-forming and cohesion-building. Chapter Four presents and describes the large-N data used to conduct the statistical analysis in this project. The Rebel Leaders in Civil War project (Willingham and Doctor 2015) is indebted to over 50 research assistants from the University of Georgia who have served at various times in the coding process. Chapter Five presents the results of the statistical analysis and discusses their implications. Chapter Six offers a case study analysis of the UNITA insurgency and its leadership in the Angolan Civil War. I find that Jonas Savimbi's methods of leadership largely coincide with the theoretical framework. I conclude in Chapter Seven with some thoughts on the empirical implications of the study results and suggestions for future analysis. It summarizes the arguments, approaches, and findings of the dissertation.

# Chapter 2

# Conceptualizing Rebel Leadership

Intrastate war is forged by people and tempered by context. A country does not go to war with itself *ex nihilo*; rather, intrastate war reflects a strategic sequence of decisions and actions made by people. Some people, inevitably, shape this process more than others. In particular, rebel leaders—the individuals who mobilize and manage insurgency campaigns— play a significant role in determining the viability and behavior of armed rebel groups in conflict settings. Ignoring rebel leaders, their unique characteristics, and individual agency withholds important sources of explanatory power from analyses of intrastate war. In this section, I have two objectives: (1) to conceptualize these rebel leaders as critical decision makers, whose life experiences influence the way they operate in situations of intrastate war; and (2) to assemble the disparate and sometimes vague approaches to rebel leaders into a precise, functional tool of social inquiry.

I leverage the Most and Starr (1989) to conceptualize rebel leaders as individual decision-makers facing varying environmental constraints, which shape their ability to formulate strategies and select tactics. I find that decision-making is born primarily out of a leader's motivating purpose and military experience, and secondarily out of environmental constraints, as well as the dimensions of the actual rebel group that emerges from the pre-conflict stage.

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As treatment of rebel leaders in the literature is both varied and vague, it is useful to offer a clear criteria for identifying these actors. By effective rebel leader, I mean *the individual at the head of a rebel organization that holds ultimate decision-making power over critical strategic decisions.* Properly conceptualized, rebel leaders are not to be confused with trusted operations subcommanders, group sponsors, or celebrated organizational figureheads. From an organizational perspective, the rebel leader has both a structural and informational position of authority. The form of a rebel group's command structure does not affect the validity of this conceptualization. In most rebel organizations, the leader is readily identifiable as commander-in-chief. In a select number of groups, however, leadership is less clear. For instance, in cases of diffuse "committee style" leadership, the rebel leader can be correctly identified as the the group chairperson.[1] In other cases, rebel groups are bifurcated into political and military wings, each with respective leaders responsible for their respective operations. This is not as tricky as it may initially appear; in such cases, it is quite common for one leader to have ultimate authority over the other.[2] Ultimately, the relative ease with which rebel leaders can be identified lends some support to my conjecture that they play a significant role in shaping group behavior. The fact stands that rebel leaders cannot long hide behind the fog of war as the mobilization of fighters, the courting of foreign sponsors, the forging of intra-rebel alliances, and the negotiating of settlement terms all demand some visibility and transparency by group leadership.[3]

A rebel leader's ability to *lead* improves a group's capacity to secure short-term objectives and achieve long-term goals. I am hardly the first to suggest that rebel leaders matter. In fact, rebel leaders receive consistent, albeit anecdotal, attention throughout the recent conflict

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[1]The committee style of leadership is particularly common among Communist rebel groups in southeast Asia. For example, during the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal, the Communist Party of Nepal—Maoist (CPN-M) operated with a committee structure for the duration of the conflict.

[2]For example, Sinn Fein served as the political wing of the Provisional Irish Republican Army. This organizational approach has operational merits as the decoupling of military and political affairs adds a layer of misinformation over a rebel group's subversive actives.

[3]For a detailed account of coding guidelines, see the Appendix.

and security literature (Weinstein 2007; Lidow 2016; Staniland 2014; Shapiro 2013; Talmadge 2015; Mason 2004; Mitchell 2004; Reno 2011; Mampilly 2011; Arjona 2016). However, with a few notable exceptions, these actors are effectively sidelined in causal theories and empirical tests. Speaking to this gap, I offer a first attempt to conceptualize rebel leaders and the responsibilities they execute throughout a conflict campaign.

## 2.1 The Stages of Rebel Leadership

A dynamic threshold—conflict onset—separates two unique strategic environments: the *ex ante* and *ex post* stages. As such, rebel leadership is a role characterized by two stages: the rebel entrepreneur and the rebel commander, respectively. Prior to conflict onset, rebel leaders function as entrepreneurs focused solely on finding ways to increase organizational viability through selective incentives, recruitment, and resource allocation. Fundamentally, rebel entrepreneurs are preoccupied with group formation and sustainability, rather than military operations. Conversely, rebel commanders are borne out of the initiation and prosecution of intrastate warfare. A complete theory of group structure and cohesion must be able to explain how diverging group structures emerge at conflict onset—and how they might adapt once the fighting begins.

Not all rebel commanders begin as rebel entrepreneurs in the *ex ante* conflict phase; some assume group leadership of an active group in the midst of conflict, others break away from active rebellions to form splinter organizations, and others only mobilize their forces once the first bullets have been fired. In other words, some leaders emerge exogenously and others arise endogenously—via different pathways—to the conflict. In the first instance, some leaders build their organizations around themselves, seemingly from thin air. For example, the Liberian Civil War (1989–1996) appeared to spark overnight. In reality, group leader Charles Taylor spent three years overseeing the recruitment, training, and funding

of his movement. In .... Muammar Gaddafi agreed to patron Taylor's campaign, providing training, funds for arms, and general counsel. As a result, in December 1989, Charles Taylor led a troop of 168 insurgents under the moniker National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). Despite this support, by Taylor's own account, "I started with a shotgun and three rifles and a few dozen men behind me" Waugh (2011).[4] Conversely, Muqtada al-Sadr mobilized an armed faction during the already-active Iraqi Insurgency. As leader of the Peace Companies rebel group (previously the Mahdi Army, Jaysh al-Mahdi, or JAM), al-Sadr has proven one of the most dynamic and durable leaders in the Levant region. The only son of Ayatollah Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr, who founded the Shia nationalist Sadrist Movement in the 1980s, a vehemently nationalist political movement popular among Iraq's Shiite lower class. When Ayatollah al-Sadr was killed, Muqtada al-Sadr took over the leadership of Sadrists.

In these unique circumstances, the process of mobilizing a rebel group–and emerging as a rebel leader—is likely to face a unique set of challenges and constraints. That said, we can still identify meaningful similarities and differences in the stages of rebel leadership. In the entrepreneurial role, leaders are concerned with overcoming collective action problems that plague rebel group formation (Olson 1965; Gurr 1970; Lichbach 1998b; Mason 2004). Violence in this stage is secondary to the exigencies of group formation and maintenance, used mainly to achieve these ends. Rebel entrepreneurs focus on finding ways to increase organizational viability through recruitment, alliance formation, issue framing, and resource allocation. Fundamentally, rebel entrepreneurs are preoccupied with group formation and sustainability, rather than immediate military success. Rebel entrepreneurs are discussed at length in the next chapter. In the commander role, leaders are presumed to have achieved organizational viability, but now, organizational survival is contingent upon additional factors

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[4]In fact, Taylor's modest forces were almost defeated in their inaugural invasion, being repelled from the Liberian-Cote d'Ivoire border by Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). Taylor recruited practiced military commanders—e.g. Prince Johnson, Johnson T. Leamah, and Paul B. Harris—and purchased more substantial arms, jumpstarting a cross-country campaign across Liberia to the coastal capital of Monrovia.

such as operational effectiveness. Like rebel entrepreneurs, rebel commanders are still concerned about organizational viability; however, the conflict now requires them to be successful as operational strategists and tacticians. In this stage, leaders play a critical role in executing a successful campaign of insurgency. Decision-making in this stage is problematic due to the nature of the conflict (Kalyvas and Balcells 2010), information and commitment problems (Fearon 1995), organizational deficiencies (Staniland 2014), power imbalances (Wood 2010), foreign intervention (Regan 2002), and security dilemmas (Walter 1997).

## The Rebel Entrepreneur

To-date, the conflict and security studies have treated rebel leaders mostly as we find them: in the middle of an armed struggle against the state. In bracketing the scope of analysis to this stage of rebel leadership, existing studies have greatly improved our understanding of the management of rebellion, but left a rather immense gap in our understanding of the origins of rebel commanders and their organizations—and the selection process by which some leaders "succeed" and others fail. We cannot examine rebel leaders in an empirical or analytic vacuum; they do not spontaneously materialize as savvy commanders in combat fatigues with manifesto and AK-47 in hand. Rather, most rebel leaders spend their pre-conflict lives as social, military, or political elites. Many have advanced degrees.

Prior to war, the rebel entrepreneur must build their organizations, woo foreign sponsors, recruit subcommanders and fighters, identify other sources of revenue, facilitate training regimens, and compete for public support against other rebel entrepreneurs—all before the first bullet is fired. Rebel entrepreneurs are among the most neglected actors in conflict studies. Yet, the emergence of rebel groups and the onset of intrastate war cannot be explained fully without giving these actors direct and significant attention.

The universal set of rebel entrepreneurs features a motley crew, comprising clergy, gen-

erals, crime lords, academics, businessmen, tribal leaders, and politicians. Kuran (1989) conceptualizes these individuals as those who demonstrate an "exceptional ability to detect and help expose the incumbent regime's vulnerabilities" (42). To do so, they rely on a "diverse and distinctive set of skills, experiences, and dispositions" (Van Belle 1996) (115). Where do they come from? I conceptualize the rebel entrepreneur as "the individual most responsible for mobilizing and leading a rebel organization in the pre-war environment."[5] Generally, in the *ex ante* stage, the process of group formation is endogenous to the preferences, resources, and abilities of organization leadership. As Weinstein (2007) also observes, leadership is, at times, endogenous to group operations and dynamics. By recognizing the dynamic threshold of conflict onset, I am able to clearly identify the direction of the relationship shared by group leadership and members.

Rebel entrepreneurs face tremendous obstacles in launching and sustaining insurgencies (Kalyvas 2005).[6] While all rebel groups must "be of sufficient size and strength to challenge the government for control of specific territories", I argue that each leader type is likely to resolve this issue "in accordance to their unique set of goals, motivations, and capabilities" (Weinstein 2007: 37). Accordingly, I argue that rebel leaders construct their organizations with intentions to mitigate agency loss, sustain mobilization, and generally set themselves up for success in both the conflict and post-conflict stages. Each leader type has different preferences, resource allowances, and capacities for the leadership of a militant group. I argue this will be reflected in the way they build and manage their organizations.

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[5]The rebel leader constructs what Sinno (2008) calls "ad hoc" organizations meant for the purpose of waging war against the state.

[6]Relevant theories of group mobilization can be found in Olson (1965), Gurr (1970), Tarrow (1998), and (Lichbach 1998*a*).

## The Rebel Commander

In this project I do not aim to explain how rebel leaders become rebel commanders. Do certain structural conditions lend themselves to the presence of certain rebel leader types over others at conflict onset? Alternatively, do certain characteristics or experiences better equip individuals to mobilize a successful insurgent force? In other words, how do rebel leaders become rebel leaders? These are important questions, the answers to which have great bearing on our understanding of how insurgencies are developed. When conflict begins, the intuitive and immediate question is, "Who are we dealing with?" This is where this study picks up, with an analysis of the rebel leader as we find them: at the helm of a full-fledged military and political campaign. For the time being, underpinning my argument is an important assumption. I assert that a given pre-war environment is not predisposed to the existence of certain rebel leader types over others in ways that shape the outcomes investigated here. That is, while environmental conditions may "grease the skids" for certain entrepreneur types to be successful in launching a military campaign, the actual population of potential rebel entrepreneurs is not skewed toward one type over the other.[7] Rebel entrepreneurs, like the rest of us, must play the cards they are dealt. When conditions are not conducive to success, a skillful leader knows to wait for favorable structural shifts. Else, they risk being outbid at great personal cost by other qualified entrepreneurs that have environmental conditions on their side. As a result, we often see different leader types emerging from the same pre-war environment.

While not all rebel commanders possess the same capacity for leadership, they are held responsible to a common set of tasks. As the 2006 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* states: "[Militant leaders] provide the vision that followers strive to realize. They also offer the necessary direction, discipline, and motivation for accomplishing a given goal or task".

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[7]I am indebted to Will Moore, who first impressed on me the importance of this assumption.

Others sources point to the operational and logistical responsibilities of leaders, including the allocation of monetary resources, the provision of sufficient food, bullets, medicine, uniforms, and fuel, and the establishment of positive relationships with potential foreign backers. The rebel leader wears a lot of hats, which I sort into four categories below.

## 2.2   The Essential Tasks of Rebel Leadership

Leaders are focal points for strategy, tactics, ideology, inspiration, and managerial guidance. I argue that rebel leaders, from start to finish, impact conflict outcomes and group dynamics through four key tasks: **(1)** they offer political or ideological vision (Tse-Tung 1961; Johnston 2012; Shapiro 2012; Lidow 2016), **(2)** they provide selective incentives (Lichbach 1998*b*; Weinstein 2007; Mampilly 2011; Shapiro 2013), **(3)** they lead on the battlefield through strategy and tactics (Jones 2017; Mason 2004; Mitchell 2004; Willingham 2017; Talmadge 2015; Marten 2007), **(4)** they negotiate terms of settlement, ceasefire, and peace (Willingham 2017; Prorok 2016). Leaders who neglect any of these responsibilities only increase the chances of group elimination leading to military or political defeat. Each of these tasks offers a compelling theoretical mechanism that explains how and why leaders might matter in influencing the dynamics and outcomes of intrastate war. Williams (2016) puts it colorfully, "Like wars, recipes don't make themselves—there must be cooks, and it is important to know whether one is dealing with a novice or a master chef" (9). By identifying the critical tasks of leadership, I provide a framework which both policymakers and scholars can use to assess the aptitude of rebel leaders in conflict zones across time and space.

### Defining Group Objectives

First, rebel leaders offer a compelling political or ideological vision. It is the leader who sets, frames, and communicates a group agenda; group members look to their leader for political

direction and vision (Mason 2004; Tarrow 1998; Lidow 2016). As such, the leader serves as the operational figurehead of a rebel movement (Shapiro 2013; Johnston 2012; Jones 2017). Past approaches suggest that effective leadership is necessary to overcome collective action problems (Christia 2012; Haer 2015; Staniland 2014; Driscoll 2015; Tarrow 1998; Gurr 1970). As Tarrow (1998) points out, "Movement leadership has a creative function in selecting forms of collective action that people will respond to" (29). This requires rebel entrepreneurs to define a set of primary objectives, articulate strategic and tactical preferences, and, finally, demonstrate their own qualifications for leadership (McAdam 1996). Rebellion doesn't occur in a vacuum. Opposition groups will struggle to form when they lack an individual capable of offering the necessary guidance and charisma to motivate participation (Mason 2004; Van Belle 1996). Once a group is formed, the leader plays a vital role in maintaining the organization by framing the group's cause, incentivizing participation, and enforcing commitment to the cause among group members (Weinstein 2007; Shapiro 2013; Gates 2002). Leaders try to induce followers to commit costly acts of violence, while group members look to the leader for motivation and guidance. Without a leader to define and propagate a compelling *casus belli*, groups may dissolve—or never form in the first place.

## Managing Group Resources

Second, leaders manage group resources and help to set the stage for the provision and extraction of goods in areas of territorial control. As part of this responsibility, they recruit members and maintain mobilization by offering selective incentives through the distribution of private and public goods (Olson 1965; Weinstein 2007; Mampilly 2011; Shapiro 2013; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). Successful rebel leaders must effectively pair goals and payoff structures. At minimum, leaders increase overall group effectiveness and cohesion by ensuring that combatants are paid for their services (Lidow 2016). In some cases, they mitigate the

grave risks of conflict by making participation in armed warfare a lucrative venture. Case in point, leader types motivated by personal gain are primarily concerned with the extraction of local resources. In addition to managing organization incentive structures, the rebel leader plays an important role in financing the life of a conflict campaign and overseeing the creation and management of military supply lines and networks (Hazen 2013). Part of this process involves securing lucrative sources of revenue, whether through industry, foreign sponsors, or looting and civilian targeting. Insurgency is expensive; leaders are responsible for acquiring funds sufficient to "keep the lights on" and making sure their campaigns remain militarily viable through the management of supply lines. Operational overhead costs include the procurement of arms and munitions, the payment of fighters' salaries, and the purchase of fuel and transport vehicles. Leaders who fail to meet these basic necessities will suffer significant agency loss and organizational breakdown.

## Selecting Strategic and Tactical Directions

Third, leaders provide military strategic direction and set tactical objectives (Tse-Tung 1961; Mason 2004; Mitchell 2004; Staniland 2012; Talmadge 2015; Lawrence 1926). It is the leader who effectively serves as the commander-in-chief of the rebellion. Groups must not only survive in the political arena, but also on the battlefield (Jones 2017). Successful commanders are effectively able to design, to communicate, and execute offensive and defensive military operations. In addition, "Commanders must understand the operational and tactical implications of the *physical environment* as well as their effects on soldiers' equipment and weapons" (U.S. Army War Manual FM100-5: 75). The genius of military leadership is to recognize and develop a conception of war appropriate to the specific circumstances of the battle space (Von Clausewitz 1873). As such, leaders who lack military aptitude—including an understanding of military discipline and combat logistics—are vulnerable to military de-

feat (Hazen 2013), thus ending their chances of changing the political status quo. In line with rationalist explanations of war (e.g. Fearon 1995), effective combat leaders are better able to facilitate and communicate information regarding their organization's resolve and capability in battle, especially given the depth of their military skill set. In short, the rebel leader bears the burden of responding to evolving conditions on the ground and will most often make the final call to pursue new strategies.

## Overseeing Negotiations

Fourth, leaders negotiate terms of settlement, ceasefire, and peace (Willingham 2017; Prorok 2016).[8] As part of the conflict process, rebel leader make critical decisions relating to the timing and nature of a rebel campaign's end, faced with three perennial barriers to settlement: incomplete information, credible commitment problems, and indivisible issue stakes (Pillar 1983; Fearon 1995; Walter 1997; Reiter 2003; Cunningham, Bakke and Seymour 2012). Even in cases of rebel military victory, rebel leaders must first choose to continue the use of military force instead of seeking out ceasefire agreements or peaceful settlement. To make this decision, rebel leaders make a cost-benefit assessment of their own strategic position, the strategic positions of their opponents, and potential shifts in the conflict environment (Walter 1997). This decision requires not a small amount of situational awareness, which is greatly bolstered by previous experience in military leadership. Further, when leaders do not match settlement decisions with group values or objectives, they are likely to suffer some loss of group cohesion and a breakdown in the agreed upon terms of settlement.[9] Therefore, the process of conflict termination reflects a series of critical decisions made by rebel leaders, who must ensure that the high costs of waging insurgency are rewarded by maximizing strategic

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[8]Since 1989, roughly 40% of intrastate wars ended in negotiated settlement, whereas more than half ended in decisive victory or are still ongoing (The Economist 9 November 2013).

[9]This decision often has a significant effect on the probability of group fragmentation. In particular, it is quite common for an "extreme" wing of a rebel group to break off and continue the insurgency when a more moderate faction—led by the group leader—chooses to sign a peace agreement.

outcomes.

There is little question that rebel leaders matter, yet these actors remain sorely under-theorized in the literature. This gap has received recent acknowledgment from conflict scholars, prompting calls for rich empirical work and theorizing on rebel leaders in intrastate conflict (Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan 2016; Mitchell 2016; Prorok 2016; Tiernay 2015; Jordan 2014; Haer 2015). These calls provide further motivation to build on the RLCW data effort and theoretical framework described in the proposal.

## 2.3 The Critical Dimensions of Rebel Leadership

Thus far, I have addressed the questions of who rebel leaders are and what they do. An important follow up question is: what factors—or individual traits—critically affect a rebel leader's ability to execute the responsibilities of leadership? Today, the conflict and security literature treats rebel leaders as meaningful actors in the intrastate conflict environment, but conceptualizes them as a unitary bloc of actors. I see this as a disturbing trend. Working against this, I propose a simultaneously radical and intuitive thesis: rebel leaders embedded in similar environmental settings will make decisions in different patterns according to their personal characteristics and experiences.

What characteristics prompt variation in the type of rebel leader observed at the helm of a rebel campaign? That is, what conditions critically affect a rebel leader's ability to execute their responsibilities effectively? I start from the basic assumption that rebel leaders are not a uniform bloc of actors. That is, certain commonalities and distinctions exist across leaders in combat. Some of these characteristics point to the existence of ideal types of rebel leaders. I argue meaningful variation in rebel leader type can be identified at the nexus of two key dimensions: the rebel leader's motivation for conflict and the degree of their military experience. Derived from the opportunity and willingness framework (Most and Starr 1989),

a leader's underlying motive and capacity for military leadership should profoundly shape their strategic objectives—and the means by which they achieve those ends.

## Motive for Conflict

The first dimension, a rebel leader's motivation for conflict, is conceptualized according to their desire to procure public or private goods. Such a distinction has a long history in the discipline. Collier and Hoeffler (2004) identify "greed" and "grievance" as categories of motivation for conflict. Generally, these have been theorized as unique solutions to the collective action problem. Similarly, Weinstein (2007) offers a classification of insurgency with "activist" and "opportunist" categories. Here, I conceptualize leader motives as goal-setting values that shape strategic direction, which in turn affects tactical selection in areas of recruitment, mobilization, and combat warfare.[10] This approach allows me to pinpoint the mechanisms through which different leader types navigate similar structural constraints, both before the fighting begins and continuing after the first shots are fired. The empirical record makes abundantly clear that not all insurgencies are launched with the intention to "fix" or alter a political system; rather many emerge as predatory forces to capitalize on weak state capacities. As such, leaders motivated by public goods tend to manage more inclusive campaigns with long-term horizons aimed at achieving political or ideological objectives. Conversely, leaders motivated by private goods see conflict as a source of profit and material benefits. So long as these leaders "do well out of conflict" they are likely to sustain their rebel campaigns (Skaperdas 2002; Mampilly 2011; Weinstein 2007; Lidow 2016).

I argue that a leader's concern for public or private goods influences patterns of group

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[10]I readily acknowledge that motives are not necessarily mutually exclusive nor always directly observable. For example, rebel leaders can shift their focus from public to private goods in a given conflict year, whereas private goods driven leaders may ostensibly operate on the basis of political grievance, disguising themselves as political freedom fighters, all the while operating on the basis of profit. Over the course of a conflict, leaders may even shift from economic modes of organization to social and political modes of organization (Weinstein 2007). I do not preclude the possibility that motivations are in some cases endogenous to the fighting, and therefore likely to evolve over the course of a conflict.

recruitment, formation, and behavior in armed intrastate conflict. Case in point, Mitchell (2004) contends that leaders are motivated either by self-interest or ideology when making decisions to engage in intrastate political violence. At a basic level, it is individual leaders who induce their followers to commit acts of violence on the basis of private or public goods (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). As Price (2018) puts it, "Leaders of value-based organizations, as opposed to their counterparts in profit-based organizations, are important because they help define communicate, translate, and frame organizational goals that may not be as 'specific, tangible, and calculable' as goals in other organizations (81). Rebel group viability is largely determined by a leader's ability to secure resources and provide current or future incentives to participation—this is true for both rebel entrepreneurs and rebel commanders (Kilcullen 2009; Weinstein 2007). Effective leaders are able to balance the distribution of private and public goods to secure membership loyalty and induce members to participate in fighting. My theory proposes that rebel leaders, according to their motives for conflict, will balance these differently.

Leaders motivated by public goods desire lasting political change in the form of regime change or territorial autonomy. They preside over "activist rebellions" in which participation is ideally comprised of highly committed principals and agents. These types of leaders will appeal to their followers and potential recruits on the basis of the perceived infeasibility of the status quo and future public goods to be gained, i.e. political empowerment, greater economic mobility, religious freedoms, etc. Since these goals are far-reaching and rarely occur overnight, it is in such leaders' best interest to recruit highly committed individuals (Weinstein 2007; Forney 2015)—or create them through political and ideological training Green (2018). Committed recruits operate with long-terms horizons with respect to the expected returns on their participation. This is not to say that leaders motivated by public goods will not use selective incentives to mobilize fighters. Rather, they are likely to use a broader set of select incentives. For example, Hezbollah in Lebanon provides the families of

its fighters with education and monthly allowances. The Islamic State in the Levant promises the protection of its fighter's families and approximately $400 a month for services rendered (FATF 2015). These mixed incentives are designed to attract the kind of recruit that leaders motivated by public goods desire—i.e. those that share their preferred strategic outcomes and means of warfare. Leaders motivated by public goods, peace is untenable until their political or ideological demands are met.

Conversely, leaders who are primarily interested in filling their own coffers will create a group that reflects these values—a machine for waging profitable war. Private goods based leaders will inevitably attract other opportunistic individuals, or will rely on coerced fighting forces. While both private and public good-based leaders need opportunities for conflict to be present, private goods-driven leaders leech these resources to generate personal profit steams and recruit followers only when it further increases their own coffers. Private goods-based leaders have to be extremely careful to balance the immediate distribution of select incentives with the promise of "more to come". This rebel leader tends to emerge where a weak state provides the opportunity for the leader to develop a profitable campaign. To these types of leaders, peace is not only precarious, but it is potentially unprofitable, thus when leaders do well out of war, they are more likely to sustain the violence (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). In well-documented case, the Liberian rebel leader Charles Taylor promised each of his sub-commanders a $75,000 gift and a house as reward for participation. He also promised that the highest positions of political power would be awarded to his earliest followers, members of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) "Special Forces" (Lidow 2016: 172). Upon seeing that these promises were unlikely to be fulfilled, Prince Johnson, a NPFL commander, broke away from Taylor's organization to form his own rebel group, the "Independent" NPFL. This slowed Taylor's early momentum significantly. To avoid addition fragmentation, Taylor began the practice of awarding his sub-commanders with occasional payments of $10,000 to $30,000 dollars (Lidow 2016), continuing the practice for the duration of his campaign.

## Military Experience

Although conflict motivation is a crucial factor, it represents only one side of the story. The pursuit of public versus private goods is conditioned, in large part, by a leader's military experience. I theorize that leaders with military experience are different from leaders who lack sufficient military training or consolidate their power on the sole basis of an over-arching political vision. Although political skills are a necessary component for successful leadership in armed intrastate conflict, it is not sufficient. Rather, leaders with military skills are often able to sustain a conflict and control the nature of the violence without offering a compelling ideological message. Insurgency, after all, is ultimately a military contest. Very simply, the second dimension of rebel leader type is conceptualized as the extent to which a rebel leader has prior military service, formal training, or combat experience. First and foremost, intrastate conflict is a military contest instigated by a non-state forces. "Leaders need to design organizational structures that educate and train soldiers, procure and maintain equipment...fight on the battlefield, and conduct numerous other tasks that militaries need to accomplish" (Jones 2017: 89).

Past approaches suggest that a leader's background has implications on their group's ability to wage war. Mitchell (2004) theorizes that leaders exert a great deal of control over the range and nature of political violence that is employed within a state, but this control is determined, in part, by who they are and what they represent. Mason (2004) observes that effective leaders are typically well educated and possess the skills and experiences associated with operating in formal organizations. In poverty-stricken conflict-ridden environments, individuals with these types of skills and experiences are rare. Those who do possess wartime entrepreneurial skills are vital to the organizational efforts of local dissidents. The past background and experiences of the principals themselves should have a direct bearing on how a conflict plays out among various agents. It should also have implications for the

nature of warfare observed.

Leaders with military experience formulate and execute strategies always considering the efficacy and efficiency of their actions; they create strong cohesive command structures and are less likely to experience principal-agent problems. Concerns about military effectiveness likely weigh heavily on their minds. Leaders lacking military experience are more concerned with ideological or profit-seeking agendas at the expense of sound military strategy; they implement weak command structures and suffer from principal-agent problems as a result.

Sechser (2004); Horowitz, Stam and Ellis (2015) find evidence that a leader's military experience shapes decision-making with respect to the use of force. For Shapiro (2013), leaders of insurgent organizations are vital to an organization's military operations. Furthermore, Talmadge (2015) argues that leaders play an important role in promoting military effectiveness through the implementation of promotion patterns, command structures, and training regimens. Extending this type of approach to the level of intrastate conflict, I expect that variation in the management of rebel organizations is driven in part by the observed differences between leaders' military capability.

A leader's lack of military experience makes it difficult for that individual to develop and select optimal strategies and tactics. They are less likely to be able to recognize threats and adapt to changes in the environment. Most importantly, they are more likely to lose control to sub-commanders within organizations, and oversee unwieldy organizations that fail to reflect their preferences. In contrast, leaders with military experience are better equipped to target selectively, while also possessing greater capability to increase or decrease levels of violence and intensity. Political vision is a complement to but not a substitute for combat efficacy and effectiveness. An effective military leader will match political goals with military means (Jones 2017).

Additionally, a solid military background helps a leader maintain control of the organization through continued success on the battlefield. Military leaders can implement cohesion,

discipline, and selective forms of punishment and incentives. As a result, the military leader is better equipped to deal with principal-agent problems by more effectively monitoring agents and ensuring that orders are carried out. Stronger command structures serves to amplify a leader's agency within a conflict. Military leaders are better able to implement cohesive and effective mid-level command structures. This allows for better communication between battlefield units across a combat theater and encourages discipline among subordinates.

I argue that military actions speak louder than politics in anarchic situations of armed intrastate warfare. Thus, military prowess is a key determinant of rebel group survival and eventual victory in the rebel commander stage. The leaders who balance political and military success are most likely to achieve decisive victories over their opponents. Military experience, or lack thereof, also complicates the bargaining process, as leaders with varying levels of experience will perceive and assess battlefield information differently, while also showing variation in their level of commitment to a deal. They may also suffer from an inability to communicate deals to sub-commanders making it difficult to enforce the terms of a deal within their own organization. Military training, both in terms of quantity and quality, can make the difference in a leader's decision to pursue costly conflict in favor of peace. Not to mention, the presence of military experience may also influence the extent to which leaders prioritize important issues stakes versus combat objectives.

## 2.4   A Typology of Rebel Leaders

The intersection of motivations for conflict and military experience yields four types of rebel leaders: the Ideologue, the Insurgent, the Operator, and the Warlord. These are displayed in Table 2.1. Each leader type produces testable implications for further study. Overall, I theorize that rebel leaders make decisions in discernible patterns, according to their type. That is, I expect the critical dimensions of leadership identified in the section above to affect

the management of armed rebel groups in intrastate war.

Table 2.1: Typology of Rebel Leaders in Intrastate War

| | Military Experience | |
|---|---|---|
| **Motivation** | No Military | Military |
| Public Goods | **"The Ideologue"** <br><br> *Examples*: Hassan Nasrallah; Manuel Perez; Abdullah Ocalan | **"The Insurgent"** <br><br> *Examples*: Ahmed Massoud; Doku Umarov; John Garang |
| Private Goods | **"The Operator"** <br><br> *Examples*: Ernest Wamba Dia Wamba; George Boley; Abu Musab al-Zarqawi | **"The Warlord"** <br><br> *Examples*: Johnny Korama; Khadaffy Janjalani; Laurent Nkunda |

## The Ideologue

The Ideologue is the rebel leader oriented toward the provision of public goods, who lacks military experience. The Ideologue tends to be a disgruntled politician or social movement leader. She emphasizes lasting shifts in the political landscape and, therefore, makes decisions with a long-term horizon. In her pursuit and provision of public goods, she tends to be more politically inclusive. In running a rebel campaign, her focus is less on military matters and more on the political arena.[11] As a result, Ideologues tend to delegate military matters to their subordinates in order to focus on political or ideological objectives. Overall, the Ideologue is the most likely to manage campaigns that prioritize "hearts and minds" operations within local communities and recruit highly-committed staff.

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[11] Their lack of military increases the probability of sub-optimal modes of rebellion and undesirable military outcomes. Thus, Ideologues tend to delegate to more experience commanders. For example, this may explain why leaders such as Gerry Adams (IRA) or Khaled Meshal (Hamas) focus primarily on political responsibilities and delegate military responsibilities to trusted lieutenants. Although principal-agent problems may arise as a consequence of this bifurcation and diffuse structure, the Ideologue's ability to offer vision, embody a cause, and serve as a symbolic figurehead may help mitigate these issues in order to sustain organizational viability in the long run.

Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah represents the Ideologue ideal type. Nasrallah is a spiritual leader who sits at the helm of the Lebanese religious and political group Hezbollah. He never acquired military experience, acting as a political and religious activist. Nasrallah offers political and spiritual guidance, governs primarily on the basis of public goods, and chooses to delegate military strategy to senior level commanders. Similarly, Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, carefully recruited former leaders of the Iraqi Baathist regime, among others, to lead the military front of his campaign. Abu Ali al-Anbari, who managed ISIS operations in Syria until 2016, was a major general in the Iraqi military under Saddam Hussein. Abu Muslim al-Turkmani, a former lieutenant colonel in the Iraqi military's intelligence core and special forces officer, led ISIS operations in Iraq until his death in 2015 (Barfi 2016).[12]

The Ideologue is more likely than other leader types to be politically inclusive and build a leadership command structure that features a larger loyalty norm. Their lack of military experience, however, inhibits their ability to assume direct control over military operations. As a result, the Ideologue's military command structure is often more decentralized making monitoring of lower-level commanders difficult. The Ideologue's emphasis on political goals leads them to prefer the benefits of peace to the costs of war. However, this depends largely on the size of their demands, which are wide ranging for Ideologues. While some Ideologues have practical, tangible political goals, there are still others who act as ideological zealots. For the former, an agreement that addresses important grievances and allows for agency and inclusion in a post-conflict political landscape is sufficient for a deal to emerge. For the latter, the bargaining space is narrow, and in some instances, it may be otherworldly effectively keeping a deal out of reach. This latter camp of leaders is comprised mainly of hard-core activists, such as Osama bin Laden (AQ) or Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi (IS). Leaders of this sort emphasize indivisible issue stakes, thus perpetuating durable and protracted

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[12] "I describe Baghdadi as a shepherd, and his deputies are the dogs who herd the sheep [the Islamic State's members]," said Hisham al-Hashimi, a security analyst at the Al-Nahrain Centre for Strategic Studies. "The strength of the shepherd comes from his dogs" (Telegraph 2014).

insurgencies.

## The Insurgent

The Insurgent, like the Ideologue, is motivated by the desire for public goods. The Insurgent, however, enters the conflict arena with the military acumen and experience necessary to carry out an effective military campaign. Accordingly, the Insurgent tends to rely more heavily on the battlefield to bring about desired political ends. She will be wary of gambling away long-term victories for short-term gains. Bottom line, the Insurgent understands the importance of effective battlefield leadership amidst the mire and chaos of warfare. For the Insurgent, success on the battlefield is the more effective means of securing lasting shifts in the political landscape.

Case in point, the Afghan rebel leader, Ahmed Shah Massoud, was known just as much for his political savvy as his military acumen (Coll 2004). Military success was inextricably linked to Massoud's political success, enabling him to secure briefly a high-level position in the Afghan government(Williams 2013). Another example is Ahmed Godane, who led the Somali rebel group Al Shabaab from 2007 to 2014. Before leading Shabaab, Godane trained and fought in Afghanistan with the Taliban forces (Anzalone 2014). His tenure over Shabaab is marked by a massive expansion of the group's military capabilities and territorial control.

Insurgents depend on both on organization norms of high-commitment and more on a rigid system of command. They recruit rebels who resonate with the political message of the organization, often sharing in the leader's articulated grievances. As such, where the Insurgent suffers agency loss it is rarely for lack of proper enforcement mechanisms, but because the Insurgent fails to deliver upon promises of military success or lacks the material resources needed to maintain operation costs. The Insurgent can mitigate agency loss by securing a stable stream of income to fund operations, winning military battles, and properly

training recruits. The Insurgent makes decisions with a longer-term horizon and tends to maintain a more inclusive political agenda.

## The Operator

The Operator is the rebel leader motivated by private goods, who lacks military experience. The Operator runs a fast-and-lose campaign of predation, motivating recruits almost entirely with material incentives. Accordingly, her fighters' loyalty is only as good as their last paycheck and the anticipation of the "loot" to come. To maintain group cohesion, the Operator makes decisions which ensure that combat campaigns translate into economic gains, even at the expense of political and military success. When revenue streams dry up, groups led by an Operator are at high risk of principal-agent problems— especially moral hazard— and fragmentation. In such cases, Operator-led organizations routinely implode or evolve into criminal mafia-style organizations. Overall, the Operator tends to enter conflicts featuring a particularly weak state, allowing the Operator to establish a base of operations and mobilize support.

For example, Dr. George Boley entered the Liberian Civil War (1989-2003) at the head of the Liberian Peace Council (LPC). Prior to the conflict, Boley was a minister in President Samuel Doe's administration. Dr. Boley oversaw a constant streak of predatory and lethal attacks against civilians. The LPC lacked any real unifying political objectives, and group subcommanders were left to pursue personal profit (Gerdes 2013). Boley successfully retained control of the critical trade ports in Greenville and Buchanan for the duration of the campaign. The steady revenues that came from international trade through this ports funded LPC operations and greatly increased Boley's personal wealth. A classic Operator, Boley was successful in capitalizing on the chaos in Liberia and established a steady source of revenue for himself and his cadre of henchmen.

Generally speaking, Operators are likely to build robust systems of monitoring and punishment over their fighters. As these leaders are unlikely to use ideological or political training to build norms of cooperations (Green 2018), they must use spot-payments and strict punishment to maintain loyalty and obedience. On the one hand, challenges to the principal-agent problems are likely to abound in groups led by an Operator, posed by rogue lieutenants and mid-level commanders who seek their own profit streams (Lidow 2016). On the the other , Operators may encourage pecuniary adventurism on the part of mid-level commanders to avoid being burdened with the responsibility of offering payments for their services. This type of single-faceted decision-making often weakens the rebel organization and decreases popular support for the Operator. In conflicts featuring a strong counterinsurgent force or competing rebel group, the Operator's willingness to emphasize short-term pecuniary gains over long-term political goals can be detrimental to the group's long-term sustainability and viability. This vulnerability has the effect of insulating the leadership, splintering the organization, encouraging high-level military defections, and increasing indiscriminate violence. On average, I expect Operators to make executive decisions on the basis of securing private rewards, even at the expense of sound military doctrine. The Operator motivates others with material incentives and severe punishment. As a result, their subcommanders' loyalty is only as good as their last paycheck and the anticipation of loot to come.

## The Warlord

Finally, the Warlord is the rebel leader motivated by private goods who enters a campaign with prior military experience. The Warlord is a ruthless actor, capable of managing a prolonged, vicious campaign. The concept of "warlord" has been stretched beyond recognition to include a wide array of characteristics, rendering it analytically meaningless. My goal, in this project, is to reinvigorate the concept with analytical precision. One of the defining

features of the Warlord is her dual focus on military and economic gains. For the Warlord, military operations are a means to maximizing economic profits. She will use her military experience to capitalize on domestic anarchy and create fiefdoms under the barrel of a gun for the sole purpose of creating, maintaining, and developing private revenue streams.

An example of the Warlord is "The Chairman" Laurent Nkunda, who led various rebel factions in the Congolese conflict theater for more than two decades Stearns (2012). Originally trained in the armed forces of the DRC, Nkunda created a cult of personality in his fight against perceived political enemies in the region. Reportedly, Nkunda targeted gold, coltan, and other precious minerals, as aggressively as he targeted non-combatant populations in the Great Lakes region of Africa (Stearns 2012).

Similar to the Insurgent, the Warlord takes ownership over military operations—including planning and strategy—and constructs a strong centralized military command structure. As a result, they tend to have better control over their organizations and can more effectively monitor for divisive or disgruntled subcommanders. They are poised to formulate sound strategies and select effective tactics in response to their conflict environment and opponents. Principal-agent problems are less likely to arise under the leadership of a Warlord since they are capable of monitoring agents more closely due to their close relationship with field commanders and foot soldiers. Warlords are equipped to implement a strong mid-level command structure shaped by training, discipline, and the provision of spot payments and credible promises of future rewards.

Ultimately, rebel leaders make decisions in pursuit of personal gain or some articulated political or ideological public-good. Effective leaders are able to manipulate motivations for public and private goods to secure membership loyalty and induce members to participate in fighting. Extending beyond the motive-opportunity framework, I theorize that leader type in the ex post conflict stage depends on their motivation for conflict and level of military experience. In effect, public goods-based leaders rely on large loyalty norms, while leaders

interested in private goods rely on small loyalty norms. However, it is the cross cutting effects of military experience that determine whether or not the leader is able to prosecute a conflict campaign, and the appropriate levels of violence, successfully. The interplay of these dimensions has ramifications for the , and the likelihood of war versus peace.

## 2.5   Summary

This conceptual framework produces testable implications. This tool can be used to explore a large number of organizational dynamics and conflict processes. Indeed, the conflict land-scape is especially likely to facilitate the rise and influence of charismatic and capable leaders. With formal institutions inherently weakened, the opportunity for enterprising individuals to carry agency in shaping the environment around them is higher, all else equal.

Policymakers and military decision-makers have long emphasized the importance of rebel leadership. Indeed, the U.S. Army & Marine Corps (2007) emphasize that "Leadership is critical to any insurgency. An insurgency is not simply random violence; it is directed and focused violence aimed at achieving a political objective. It requires leadership to provide vision, direction, guidance, coordination, and organizational coherence. Successful insurgent leaders make their cause known to the people and gain popular support. Their key tasks are to break the ties between the people and the government and to establish credibility for their movement. Their education, background, family and social connections, and experiences contribute to their ability to organize and inspire the people who form the insurgency" (1.13). I take this perspective seriously and aims to provide policy and security practitioners with a more complete understanding of exactly how leadership characteristics affect the decisions rebel leaders make with respect to the execution of insurgent warfare. Towards this end, in the following chapter, I leverage the conceptualization and classification of rebel leadership presented here to explain differences in rebel structure and cohesion.

# Chapter 3

# Rebel Leaders and the Management of Armed Rebel Organizations

> "I started with a shotgun and three rifles and a few dozen men behind me."
>
> — Charles Taylor, leader of National Patriotic Front of Liberia

> "Upon the arrival of the enemy army to oppress and slaughter the people, their leaders call on them to resist. They assemble the most valorous elements, arm them with old rifles or bird guns, and thus a guerrilla movement begins."
>
> — Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*

## 3.1  Rebel Leaders and Their Organizations

Intrastate conflicts—and the rebel campaigns that propel them—are not created equal. Policymakers and military decision makers have known this to be true for some time. Scholars have been slower in addressing this observed variation. When conflict begins, the intuitive and immediate question is, "Who are we dealing with?"

Like other human organizations, rebel groups rely on capable managers, leaders responsible for translating group objectives to action. In the words of an Al-Qaeda operations manual (Al-Muqrin 2009), "Leadership is what unifies, shapes, and executes. Leaders unify in the sense they integrate under one umbrella all the cadres, efforts, capabilities, and experience that the movement possesses" (109). I suggest that rebel organizations can be understood as a function of the person in charge. A focus on group leadership provides a useful vantage point of a rebel organization's objectives, performance, and viability. I build on VanBelle's important observation that "the difference between opportunity and success is probably the best location to continue the examination of leadership in collective activity and to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of revolution" (1996: 130).

A theoretical and empirical focus on these individuals offers unique and needed insight into patterns of rebel group management. In the spirit of Horowitz, Stam and Ellis (2015), I argue that a rebel leader's attributes and pre-war experiences shape the choices they make in war. Williams (2016) puts it colorfully, "Like wars, recipes don't make themselves—there must be cooks, and it is important to know whether one is dealing with a novice or a master chef" (9). Building on this observation, I provide a framework which both policymakers and scholars can use to assess the aptitude of rebel leaders in conflict zones across time and space. To make this argument, I rely on a conceptual model first introduced by Most and Starr (1989), in which leaders serve as rational decision-making agents, constrained by a host of structural and individual-level factors. Empirical evidence increasingly confirms the relevance of leaders in intrastate conflict, but the theoretical understanding of the causal importance of leadership is still fairly impoverished (Ahlquist and Levi 2011). Conflict scholars, policymakers, and military decision-makers are deeply interested in the behavior and dynamics of the non-state armed groups involved in intrastate war.

In this study, I focus on three components of group structure: centralization, operational specialization, and size. Variation in these dimensions carry important implications for the

nature and intensity of violence in conflict, the viability of an insurgency, and a rebel organization's structural cohesion. I then consider the relationship between rebel leader type and the probability that a rebel group splits into competing factions.

## 3.2 The Structure of Rebel Organizations in Intrastate War

I argue that rebel organizations reflect the voluntary and purposive behavior of their leaders; organizers mobilize initial recruits, define the agenda of the movement, and have some latitude to determine the structure and approach of the guerrilla army (Clapham 1998; Weinstein 2007).[1] In turn, a rebel group's organizational structure shapes the strategic exchange between conflict actors, the group's own prospects of military victory, and the political landscape that emerges after war (Whiteford 2002). Accordingly, I argue that rebel leaders are likely to utilize to the fullest their available resources and personal capacities for leadership to build organizations that maximize the likelihood of success.

Weinstein conjectures, "An organization's initial stock of economic and social endowments and its decisions about how to utilize them may be themselves a function of leadership, ideology, and strategy" (2007: 328). This dissertation, ten years after Weinstein's seminal analysis, takes up the baton by directly theorizing and testing the ways in which "leadership, ideology, and strategy" might explain diverging organizational systems of command, control, and cohesion under various environmental constraints. In fact, Haer (2015) explicitly acknowledges the need to address this pending puzzle: "Another potential fruitful research avenue that should be examined is the idea that the characteristics of the leader influence the structure of her armed group. So far, the characteristics and the capabilities of the leader

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[1]I define a rebel organization as a collective of individuals made up of formal structures of command and control, which intends to seize political power using violence (Knight 1992; Staniland 2014).

are, to a certain extent, dismissed" (177).

The structure of a rebel organization is one of the most important decisions that leaders make. It is the responsibility of the rebel leader to form an "organizational model that allows her to command and control her agents and that is sufficiently robust to stand up to opponents, but flexible enough to change with new circumstances (Tarow 1994: 136; Haer 2015 47). Interestingly, little work has been done to connect rebel leaders directly this this essential process. In the section that follows, I offer a leader-based theory of rebel organizational structure, in which a group's structure is not "path determined" by structural endowments, but is shaped by the type of leader at the helm. To make this case, I focus on three dimensions of a rebel group's organizational structure—centralization, specialization, and size—and describe how variation in these factors is shaped by differences in rebel leadership.

## What Is Organizational Structure? What Does It Do?

Why study the structural organization of rebel groups? In the literature, the explanation of rebel group performance and behavior has taken an overwhelming precedent. The explanation of rebel group action is a compelling and salient research agenda; however, it is too often overlooked that the basis by which commands are translated to action is intimately intertwined with a group's structure. "A favorable structure does not guarantee the proper execution of a process but is essential for its proper execution—it is necessary but not sufficient" (Sinno 2008: 87). Indeed, "Armed groups cannot survive merely on motivation and incentives alone; they also need an organizational structure that is capable of translating goals into action (De Zeeuw 2008). Accordingly, it is incumbent upon a proper theory of rebel leadership—the management of insurgent campaigns—to provide an explanation for variation in how rebel leaders choose to articulate, monitor, and enforce operational com-

mands.

The empirical record provides ample evidence that organizational structure is directly connected to group behavior and performance. For instance, Jones (2017) points out that the highly centralized military structure of the FLN enabled it to withstand considerable opposition by the French-Algerian state. Heger, Jung and Wong (2012) demonstrate that groups with greater degrees of hierarchy in the chain of command inflict more lethal attacks.

The structure of a rebel organization can be understood as its *common internal processes of decision-making control that frame the interactions between organization members as well as the similarity and insularity of the members* (Knight 1992; Pynchon and Borum 1999). In this project, I focus on three features as critical sources of variation in rebel group structure: centralization, specialization, and size. The literature consistently identifies these factors as essential components of an organization's operational structure (Staniland 2014, 2012; Haer 2015; Kenny 2010; Sinno 2008; Jones 2017), each possessing meaningful and nuanced implications on organizational performance and cohesion. Further, each structural component can easily be connected to group leadership, reflecting their choices throughout a conflict campaign.

## The Dimensions of Group Structure

How do organization structures differ? Organizations are "collective actors with formal membership boundaries; official, specialized goals; and routinely internal processes of decision-making control, and allocation of resources that structure the interactions between members" (Knight 1992). The structure of a rebel organization, then, can be understood as its *common internal processes of decision-making control that frame the interactions between organization members*. In this project, I focus on three features as critical sources of variation in rebel group structure: centralization, specialization, and size. The literature consistently identifies

these factors as essential components of group structure (Staniland 2014, 2012; Haer 2015; Kenny 2010; Sinno 2008), each possessing meaningful implications on group behavior and viability. Further, each structural component can easily be connected to group leadership, reflecting their choices throughout a conflict campaign.

Of course, other components of rebel group structure have been considered in the literature. For instance, Sinno (2011) defines six basic organizational structure types: centralized, decentralized, networked, patron-client, multiple, and fragmented. It is unclear why these six are the only types featured from the set of possible combinations produced from the combination of the five critical dimensions of organizational structure he identifies(Sinno 2008).[2] There also seems to be some equivocation of rebel organization and movement in Sinno's specification of structural dimensions (e.g. his "multiple" and "fragmented" structure types). Because I am explicitly interested in rebel *organizations* I do not recognize the presence of multiple or fragmented rebel movements as determinants of a rebel organization's structural design. Neither do I recognize the presence of a foreign sponsor as a structural dimension. While foreign sponsorship does affect the interaction between members of a rebel group, the sponsor cannot be understood to fit within "the formal membership boundaries" of the armed rebel organization. Neither can the rebel group reasonably be considered a formal member of the sponsoring state. Accordingly, the sponsor-rebel relationship is dyadic, not an internal process. As such, foreign sponsorship—though often relevant to the decision making process within rebel groups—cannot be included as a critical dimension of rebel group structure.

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[2]Sinno (2008) highlights five dimensions of group structure: the number of independent organizations, the presence of a "supra-organizational institution", organizational redundancy, centralization, patronage, and specialization.

## Centralization

Centralization refers to the extent to which a group's system of command is characterized by a hierarchical structure. More formally, Sinno (2008)—citing Duverger (1959)—defines centralization as "the measure of distribution of power over decision making among top-tier leadership and second or subsequent level cadres within the organization" (37). In a hierarchical organization, positions of authority are strictly determined by placement in the chain of command, which is strictly "vertical"; communication flows up to managers (feedback) or down to subordinates (orders) (Hatch and Cunliffe 2006). All else equal, rebel groups with higher levels of centralization tend to be more disciplined on and off the battlefield (Heger, Jung and Wong 2012; Haer 2015, 2012; Kenny 2010; Sinno 2008; Jones 2017). In intrastate war, centralization can help make militants more effective by supporting resource sharing, minimize discplinary problems, and reducing contracting costs (Shapiro 2013; Miller 1992). Indeed, Lenin argued that centralized leadership was essential to the success of a revolutionary movement, as this arrangement solidified a stable leadership (Sinno 2007: 76; Friedland et al. 1982). Indeed, all else equal, rebel leaders seem to prefer centralized command structures (Jones 2017; Sinno 2008)—more than 75 percent of the groups in my data have a more centralized command structure. However, there is ample evidence that the implementation of decentralized structures can serve as an optimal structural choice.

One of the benefits of decentralization is organizational resiliency. For instance, Duval, Christensen and Spahiu (2010) argue, "Rigidly hierarchical structures are vulnerable; diffuse networks are robust. Hierarchical structures have specialized paths that represent the only communications channels between the nodes, providing a formalized chain of command." Conversely, in groups with decentralized structures, the agenda-setting capacity of the leader is weaker. As Heger, Jung and Wong (2012) argue, in these groups, "There is not necessarily a clear point of origin for agenda-setting or a focal point from which information flows.

Instead these organizations are characterized by lateral flows of information, with many potentially legitimate voices. As such, command and control mechanisms follow far less routinized paths. This flexibility also makes it possible for multiple actors to act as agenda-setters over the course of a dispute" (748) Moreover, members of decentralized groups have greater discretion in operational decisions and activities. It is important to clarify that the decentralization of group command is not merely the absence of control. Rather, it often reflects an intentional decision made by group leadership to optimize group resiliency or avoid operational inefficiency in a given strategic environment. For instance, during the 1970s, faced with great geographical distance between MPLA leadership in Congo–Brazzaville and MPLA fighters in Angola, MPLA leader Angostino Neto encouraged his fighting units to "take more initiative in military and political matters" (James 2011). In another case, Jones (2017) points out that the decentralized structure of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was largely motivated by the need to compartmentalize its highly heterogenous fighting corps.

Importantly, organizational structures—especially with respect to centralization—change over time to meet new constraints and opportunities (Ranstorp 1994). For example, the Provisional Irish Republican Army opted for a more centralized command structure "whenever it could", only moving away from a more hierarchical military structure when facing sustained pressure from the British counter-insurgent forces (Shaprio 2013: 17; Horgan and Taylor 1997: 27).

### Operational Specialization

Operational specialization specifies the extent to which a rebel organization delegates political and military matters to unique "wings" or units within the organization. Broadly, levels of specialization represent the marching of tasks and skills within a rebel organization. This dynamic is most pronounced in the delegation of political and military matters. How group leaders coordinate activities between political and military wings provides insight into orga-

nization objectives, priorities, and points of vulnerability. While I focus on this expression of specialization, rebel groups construct units which specialize in other tasks as well, such as: logistics, public relations and foreign affairs, intelligence, finance, and social services.

The bifurcation of political and military operations is relatively common among rebel organizations. For example, continuing with the earlier example, Sinn Fein served as the political wing of the Provisional Irish Republican Army for a number of years, managing all negotiations and public relations. The decoupling of military and political affairs has a number of operational merits. First, it adds a layer of misinformation over the rebel group's subversive actives. Second, it reduces the probability of malpractice as persons with corresponding talents are likely to be placed in positions where they will be most effective. Third, operational specialization can help the rebel organization "preempt the entry of competitors", allowing the organization to meet the needs of multiple social groups or communities, while benefitting from the "prestige and resources of the wider organization" (Sinno 2007: 40). Fourth ,Dresden (2017) argues that the creation of a political wing in a rebel group serves as a"convertible capability", providing group leaders and officers the with the skills and infrastructure needed for organizing supporters and attracting voters in post-conflict elections. so these wings may set rebel leaders up for success in the post-conflict space. Finally, rebel leaders often rely on the political wing of the organization to identify, screen, and recruit potential fighters. This degree of separation allows military leaders to focus on combat operations and decreases the probability of adverse selection.

In select cases, a rebel group's political wing seems to act as a sort of sanitizing buffer between the military wing and the public, where the political wing is able to frame, contextualize, or excuse the violence conducted by group fighters. With this in mind, rebel leaders may use political wings to signal to both domestic and international audiences their credibility and intentions to "play by the rules", even if insincere.

Finally, it is important to note that while centralized rebel groups may be better equipped

to build specialized wings (Heger, Jung and Wong 2012; Sinno 2008) these are empirically and conceptually distinct features. That is, centralized militant organizations may be better able to concentrate efforts into specialized sections, whereby sub-sections focus on the production of one sort of good, such as a political campaign, providing community services, or conducting attacks. Indeed, while specialists may be equally present in non-centralized groups, without hierarchy, groups will find it harder to coordinate systematically (Heger, Jung, and Wong 2012: 749). Indeed, some leaders may choose to create specialized wings—especially towards political and military operations—with the intention of maintaining direct control over the wing best suited to their own aptitudes while delegating the leadership of the other to a more inclined subordinate.

## Rebel Size

The final dimension of group structure that I investigate is force size—i.e. the number of troops in a rebel group's active rank-and-file. I start with the observation that some rebel groups are large—exceeding the size of many formal state militaries—while others are almost impossibly small. A second important observation, and a critical assumption of this study, is that leaders attempt to control the size of their organizations to match their political objectives and military strategies.

Increases in the size of a rebel group's forces carries some obvious strategic benefits. First, it enables the group to pose a more credible threat to the state, all else equal. Second, having more troops allows the militant organization to distribute its forces strategically throughout a conflict space, rather than concentrate them in a single place. This reduces their vulnerability to elimination or insurmountable defeat in a single military engagement. Lastly, larger groups may be more effective at attracting international attention and, subsequently, the support of like-minded external actors. The benefits of increased force size are largely military-forward in nature. Of course, increases in group size may carry some strategic and operational

disadvantages as well.

Perhaps at counter-intuitively, a larger corps of fighters is not always the most desirable to a rebel leader at a given time. First, "adding more fighters raises the risk of detection and thus capture for all existing fighters" (Fearon 2008: ).[3] Indeed, larger groups face greater exposure to direct attacks by government forces. That is, as many militant groups, especially in contexts of asymmetric warfare, are motivated to maintain a more clandestine presence, larger forces run counter to this strategic constraint. Second, while the size of forces may dictate the number of attacks that a rebel is able to engage in—and how many favorable opportunities are available to it—a rebel group of greater size also faces considerable logistical challenges with respect to the procurement of arms, fuel, food, and medical supplies. Finally, rebel leaders may fear losing control of their forces if allowed to grow beyond a certain threshold.

Holding other constraints equal, I argue that rebel leaders will be interested in matching the size of their forces to the nature of group objectives and the "technology" of that active armed conflict. Like other structural dimensions, a rebel group's size "must be conducive to its strategic and tactical decisions. The range of strategies that can be initiated and the range of those that can be countered can be limited by the structure of the organization" (Sinno 2008: 47). For example, a group which conducts a guerrilla-type campaign in an asymmetric conflict will have small marginal gains from significant increases to their force size. Conversely, those rebel groups waging a military campaign in more "symmetric" conflict . Of course, the conceptualization, measurement, and causal association between these factors is rife with endogeneity. That being said, it is clear that there are strategic benefits to matching the size of your force to the immediate conflict context and broader political objectives.

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[3]Alternatively, a military-centric framework would argue that larger forces are nearly alway preferable. Relatedly, Aronson et al. (working paper) find evidence that larger rebel groups are more likely to achieve military victory or gain favorable concessions. Indeed, all else equal, larger rebel forces should be more threatening.

Understanding the determinants of rebel size is important because this factor may strongly condition the expected effects of centralization and specialization on organizational performance and behavior (Sinno 2008: 44). For example, Hutch and Cunliffe (2006) find that when centralized groups become too large, decision bottle-necks can undermine the performance by slowing down the organizational response to environmental pressures (114). We know very little about how and why differences in rebel group size emerge and only sightly more about its implications for conflict processes and outcomes.

## Leadership and the Structure of Rebel Organizations

> "Whether it's some rag-tag bunch of guys with AK-47s or a nationwide insurgency with tentacles reaching every part of the country, there is always some semblance of an organization. A bunch of pissed off guys with AK-47s stumble on a 155mm artillery shell, but they cannot do a damn thing with it without some rudimentary organization."
>
> — J.B. Walker, *Nightcap At Dawn*

I argue that rebel organizations reflect the voluntary and purposive behavior of their leaders. Organizers mobilize initial recruits, define the agenda of the movement, and have some latitude to determine the structure and approach of the guerrilla army (Clapham 1998; Weinstein 2007).[4] In turn, a rebel group's organizational structure shapes the strategic exchange between conflict actors, the group's own prospects of military victory, and the political landscape that emerges after war (Whiteford 2002). Indeed, "armed groups cannot survive merely on motivation and incentives alone; they also need an organizational structure that is capable of translating goals into action (De Zeeuw 2008). As such, the structure of a rebel organization is not simply a mundane routine or practice of insurgency; it is critical to its success. Sinno (2008) contends, "Choosing a structure is perhaps one of the most important

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[4]I define a rebel organization as a collective of individuals made up of formal structures of command and control, which intends to seize political power using violence (Knight 1992; Staniland 2014).

strategic decisions organizational leaders can make...The leaders of an organization must have two clear goals: the develop their own organization so they can execute key operations as well as possible and to hinder the ability of rival organizations to do the same" (90–91).

Interestingly, little work has been done to connect rebel leaders directly this this essential process. In the section that follows, I offer a leader-based theory of rebel organizational structure, in which a group's structure is not "path determined" by structural endowments, but is shaped by the type of leader at the helm. In short, I argue that prior military experience and motivation for conflict are critical dimensions of rebel leader type that greatly influence the decisions these actors make with respect to the organizational structure of rebel groups. As different structural configurations lend themselves to unique risks and potential benefits, leaders are motivated to align these with their ultimate organizational objectives. If this argument is generalizable, we will observe discernible, but predictable patterns of organization along the lines of centralization, specialization, and size based on a leader's motive for conflict and their prior military experience.

## Military Experience and Organizational Structure

A leader's degree of military experience greatly influences how they make decisions in the hostile, strategic environment of war. With respect to organizational structure, I argue that leaders with military experience are likely to install organizational systems that mirror their prior experience in other military organizations. First, a history of military and combat experience predisposes and enables rebel leaders to introduce a centralized structure early in the group-building process. Further, leaders with military experience often rely on pre-existing networks of seasoned fighters to staff the ranks and managerial positions of their rebel organizations. These recruits should expect to be placed in more traditional military command structures, reducing the organizational costs of adopting this structural form. Based on this logic, I argue that rebel leaders with prior military experience will be characterized by more

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rigid, hierarchical systems of command.

**Hypotheses 1**: All else equal, rebel groups led by leaders with military experience are characterized by higher levels of centralization.

Military-based leaders should be more likely to intentionally specialize their forces. First, while insurgency is certainly a joint political and military campaign, I argue that military leaders will tend to focus their attention to the military aspect while delegating political affairs to a trusted lieutenant. Moreover, military-based leaders may be especially wary of losing control over group operations as other rebel lieutenants take more direct control over the specialized wing. As such, regardless of their motive for conflict, I expect leaders with prior military experience to be more likely to specialize of their forces. Second, the delegation of tasks to specialized units is common in more traditional military organizations (Norden 2001). This expectation is articulated in the following hypothesis.

**Hypotheses 2**: All else equal, rebel organizations led by leaders with military experience are more likely to be characterized by political specialization.

I expect that military leaders will be more likely to feature larger forces than those without military experience. First, leaders with military experience are more likely to have access to pre-war networks of seasoned fighters. Second, potential recruits may have more confidence in leaders with a military background, thereby increasing their probability of joining a group, all else equal. For example, . Lastly, leaders with military experience may also have greater confidence in their ability to mount a more conventional military strategy (as opposed to guerrilla strategy), which requires higher numbers of fighters.

**Hypotheses 3**: All else equal, rebel organizations led by leaders with military experience are characterized by larger force sizes.

## Motivation for Conflict and Organizational Structure

A leader's motivation for conflict also shapes how they make decisions about group structure. With respect to the centralization of decision-making, leaders motivated by private goods cannot rely on the norms of reciprocity and trust that are featured in groups motivated by public goods. These norms of trust are only developed when group leadership articulates a strategic vision with long-term horizons—and recruit individuals committed to that enterprise. In contrast, "opportunist" leaders—being motivated by private goods—are forced to rely entirely on steady profit streams and a more rigid organizational structure to maintain organizational control. Centralization provides ready means of monitoring and enforcement—increase in information between leader and follower. This is essential in groups that are not interested in acquiring a delayed, immaterial good. This is not to say that "activist" leaders do not also form centralized command structures; rather, leaders motivated by private goods simply have fewer tools in their arsenal to maximize group discipline and cohesion; thus, they stand more to lose from failing to install hierarchical systems of control.

**Hypotheses 4**: All else equal, rebel organizations led by leaders motivated by private goods are characterized by higher levels of centralization.

I expect that leaders motivated by private goods will have a greater likelihood of forming a specialized political wing. First, these leaders are especially conscious of their need to distract observers–both domestic and international—from their profiteering or predatory behavior. In contrast, leaders motivated by public goods will be more inclined to form a rebel

group with roots in a local community—and they should be more effective at convincing local civilians their intentions to "fight the good fight" (Gates 2002). Overall, they should be more successful that their profit-motivated counterparts in this endeavor. As a result, profit-seeking leaders may choose to form a separate political wing as part of a way to amplify their capacity to gain the financial and/or complicit support of local populations, the absence of which impose undesirable costs on the organization. Second, a political wing may help profit-seeking leaders to send a sufficiently fuzzy signal to the international community regarding their true intentions and, thus, reduce the probability that international actors interfere with their operations. Ultimately, those leaders motivated by public goods have a lower marginal utility from forming a separate wing relative to those motivated by personal profit.

**Hypotheses 5**: All else equal, rebel organizations led by leaders motivated by private goods are more likely to be characterized by political specialization.

Finally, profit-seeking leaders, all else equal, should maintain smaller fighting units. First, these leaders are driven to manage more exclusive forces in order to limit the number of resources they have to expend to recruit, pay, and support their combat personnel. That is, more fighters likely means a reduced return on investment, all else equal. For example, a notorious Sierra Leone rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front, is reported to have fielded roughly 5,000 fighters by the Non-State Actors Dataset (Cunningham et al. 2013)— marginally smaller than the average rebel organization. Moreover, anywhere from 78 percent to 92 percent of the group's fighters were abducted and entirely uncompensated (Cohen 2016: 120). This suggests that, while profit-driven leaders may prefer to mobilize smaller soldiers, they may be willing to increase the size of their groups through abduction and forced-recruitment, thereby avoiding many of the costs of mobilizing larger forces. Second,

the profit-seeking leader is not, by comparison, as motivated by a sense of urgency to achieve victory as they can effectively profit from sustained conflict. Larger forces, as a result, are not as necessary to the profit-seeking leader to the achievement of their personal and organizational objectives.

**Hypotheses 6**: All else equal, rebel organizations led by leaders motivated by private goods feature smaller forces.

## Leader Type and Rebel Organizational Structure

Based on the logic of organizational structure and the specific leadership dimensions emphasized in the previous section, I describe my theoretical expectations for how these leadership characteristics interact—thereby producing the four leader types—to result in the different organizational forms we observe in instances of war.

### The Ideologue

The Ideologue is motivated by a public good, with no evidence of personal profiteering. They lack military experience prior to the onset of conflict. As discussed above, both dimensions shape the type of organization that the Ideologue will want to bring into war. First, these leaders will be the least likely to centralize forces. Their inexperience with military organization will make them less inclined (or capable) to replicate these structural forms in their own organizations. Their motives for conflict also make it likely that they will be able to compensate for lower levels in centralization with ideological indoctrination, political training, or intra-group socialization practices. In other words, the Ideologue has more tools at their disposal to build cohesion and discipline, reducing their need to oversee a highly centralized

command structure. Second, the Ideologue should be especially unlikely to specialize their forces into military and political wings. This rebel leader, with no military background, will have less experience managing organizations with specialized units. Moreover, for the Ideologue, the military and political operations of an insurgency will be more intimately connected, where those leaders with military experience may tend to emphasize military operations over political programs. The Ideologue's motive for conflict also gives them less reason to establish a separate political wing. Even without a political wing, their group's joint operations will send a sufficiently strong signal to local and international audiences of their intentions to govern responsibly, thus increasing their chances of receiving support. Finally, I expect that the Ideologue will have larger force due to the inclusive nature of their motive for conflict. As they are focused on a public good rather than personal profit, they have little to lose from recruiting large numbers of fighters into their ranks. The Ideologue might be slightly hesitate to acquire especially large forces as their lack of military experience may result in their being less confident in their ability to wage a more conventional or massive military campaign.

## The Insurgent

The Ideologue is motivated by a public good, with no evidence of personal profiteering. In contrast to the Ideologue, the Insurgent has military experience prior to the onset of conflict. First, the Insurgent should be both capable and inclined to build a highly centralized command structure do their extensive military experience. This will serve their purposes on the battlefield as they will prefer to maintain higher levels of direct control over group operations. This tendency to form centralized command structures may be slightly offset by their motive for conflict. Because the Insurgent is able attract more committed recruits, all else equal, and is not over-concerned with opportunistic followers taking a cut from their personal profits, they will be more willing—when strategically optimal—to shift to a more

decentralized command structure. Second, the Insurgent should have relatively little reason to specialize their forces other than to focus more of their own attention to the military campaign. That is, their motive for conflict provides only a moderate marginal utility of constructing a specialized wing—i.e. they have a relatively low need to send additional signals of their intentions to "fight the good fight". That said, the Insurgent's military background may incline them to construct units which specialize by task. It also allows them to delegate this responsibility of political programing and public relations to trusted lieutenants. Finally, the Insurgent should mobilize especially large forces, all else equal. Their motive for conflict, being inclusive and driven towards and public good, does not motivate them to limit the number of fighters and lieutenants with whom they must share these "spoils". Moreover, their military experience should make them more confident in their ability to manage a sizable force and engage in more conventional combat tactics.

## The Operator

The Operator is motivated by personal material profit and has no military experience prior to conflict onset. First, the Operator should be especially likely to build a centralized command structure in order to monitor the behavior of their subcommanders and fighters. Motivated by profit, these leaders are susceptible to recruiting equally profit-forward fighters and lieutenants. As such, the centralized command structure is an Operators best defense against both internal challengers and losses in profit. Their lack of military experience should undermine their efforts towards this end. While the Operator is likely to desire a more centralized structure, they may struggle to implement this effectively due to inexperience in leading such organizations. Second, I expect that the Operator will be quite likely to build a specialized political wing, relative to the Ideologue and Insurgent. Given the nature of the campaigns they lead, which are profiteering and often predatory, a separate political wing can help these organizations sanitize their campaigns and send a distracting signal to both domestic

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and international audiences regarding their intentions for war. Finally, these groups should feature smaller forces, as they will want to limit the amount of payouts they must give to their followers and will not have the military experience necessary to wage a large and highly developed combat machine.

**The Warlord**

The Warlord is motivated by personal material profit and has military experience prior to conflict onset. Based on the mechanisms outlined in this section, I expect that the Warlord will build systems which feature high levels of centralization and specialization, though they should be the smallest of all leader types. Their motive for conflict limits their capacity to build a culture or norms of discipline based on common political ideology. As such, they must rely on especially centralized command structures, which is conducive to their military background. Similarly, the Warlord will construct specialized wings for two reasons: (1) the specialization of tasks is common in more traditional military organizations, (2) this allows the Warlord to focus on the military campaign, and (3) the creation of a political wing helps these leaders to distract local and international actors from their profiteering and abusive behavior. Finally, Warlord's should oversee moderate sized forces—e.g. the median group size in our data is roughly 5,000 troops. Their military experience will make them capable of managing larger military operations, but their motive for conflict will inevitably cause them to prefer smaller number of troops to whom they are responsible financially. I summarize the expected relationship between leader type and these three structural dimensions below.

**Summary of Centralization Hypotheses:** Ideologue < Insurgent < Operator < Warlord

**Summary of Specialization Hypotheses:** Ideologue < Operator < Insurgent < Warlord

**Summary of Size Hypotheses:** Operator < Warlord < Ideologue < Insurgent

## 3.3 The Fragmentation of Rebel Organizations in Intrastate War

> "We have become political dwarfs, fragmented groups which hardly have
> control over the closest checkpoint, let alone each other."
>
> — Tarek Muharram, Syrian rebel fighter

According to Woldemariam (2011), nearly one-third of rebel groups in Sub-Saharan Africa experienced fragmentation at some point. Fragmentation is not unique to the African continent; it presents a perennial threat to rebel organizations in conflicts around the world. In fact, according to the Rebel Leaders in Civil War dataset, 31% of organizations experienced fragmentation at some point. The literature on rebel group fragmentation is relatively young—and most studies focus on the consequences of fragmentation (Kenny 2010; Woldemariam 2016; Bakke, Cunningham and Seymour 2012; Tamm 2016; Day 2017). An important body of research investigates the consequences of rebel fragmentation on conflict dynamics and outcomes. These studies indicate that the splintering of rebel organizations can have substantial influence on conflict intensity (Staniland 2014; Cunningham, Bakke and Seymour 2012), conflict duration (Mahoney 2017; Perkoski 2015), and outcome (Driscoll 2012; Kenny 2010; Findley and Rudloff 2012).[5] As such, it is important to ask: why does fragmentation occur in the first place?

A leader-based approach is well-suited to provide empirical leverage and theoretical clarity over rebel fragmentation. Generally, recent approaches to rebel leadership and the cohesion

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[5]There are also a number of excellent studies on the causes and consequences of rebel *movement* proliferation and fragmentation. For notable examples, see Fjelde and Nilsson (2018); Mosinger (2017); Cunningham (2011); Seymour, Bakke and Cunningham (2016); Bakke, Cunningham and Seymour (2012); McLauchlin and Pearlman (2012); Dowd (2015).

or behavior of their organizations share a common theme: leaders mostly serve as faceless conduits, channeling the dominant influence of environmental features.[6] For instance, Weinstein (2007) argues, "Differences in how rebel groups employ violence are a consequence of initial conditions that leaders confront" (7). By treating rebel leaders as interchangeable actors, structural theories fall short of leveraging them as sources of explanatory power. In leader-based explanations, Ahlquist and Levi (2011) point out, "The trick is to clarify the relationship between context and the particular attributes and tasks of leaders." This study investigates the microfoundations of rebel fragmentation and offers a novel explanation of how rebel leaders draw on their personal characteristics and experiences to wield independent agency on group cohesion.

Evidence from past insurgencies—such as those in Liberia, South Sudan, and Northern Ireland—suggests that rebel fragmentation reflects a belief among a group elites and fighters that their leader is unable to achieve group objectives. A motion of no confidence. I argue that this belief—and, subsequently, a rebel group's risk of fragmentation—-is especially informed by the decisions made by group leaders with respect to resource allocation and military strategy. As such, rebel leaders who fail to manage effectively in these areas are likely to suffer fragmentation. To substantiate this theory, I build on the premise that rebel leaders are not created equal; indeed, they vary considerably in their capacities for leadership. I posit two expected relationships between the dimensions of leader type and probability of group fragmentation. I argue that rebel groups with leaders who have prior military experience will be more successful on the battlefield and, therefore, are less susceptible to fragmentation. Second, rebel groups with leaders motivated by personal profit are defined by weaker loyalty norms and, therefore, are more prone to fragmentation than those groups with leaders motivated by a public good.

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[6]Notable exceptions include research by Prorok (2016), Tiernay (2015), (Hoover Green 2016), and Cunningham and Sawyer (2019). My theory builds on these studies to demonstrate how rebel leaders' *individual* experiences and characteristics shape the management of armed rebel groups in civil war.

## What is Rebel Fragmentation?

In this study, I use "fragmentation" to refer to *an event in which a segment of a rebel* organization *formally and collectively exits that rebel organization and establishes a new, independent rebel organization* (Lidow 2016; Tamm 2016).[7] This same event has also been described as "splintering" by various studies and I use the terms interchangeably. In the literature, the concept of "fragmentation" is used to refer to various processes at different levels of analysis. In some cases, it is used to describe the characteristic of a rebel *movement*, the proliferation of conflict actors, or decreases in internal discipline. This conceptual stretching is likely to cause some confusion in future studies and, as a result, stands to cloud the advice scholars offer policymakers in this important issue. For clarity, in this study, I treat rebel fragmentation as an *organization-level event*, rather than a characteristic, that varies both within and between conflict spaces and across time.

It is equally useful to specify, in the context of this study, what rebel fragmentation is not. I do not treat episodes in which a rebel subcommander or fighter deserts, defects to another warring party, or stages an internal coup as identical to events in which they create competing rebel factions. Indeed, in some cases, these processes reflect unique decisions, different solutions to similar circumstances, altogether. In other cases, the defection or desertion of group members may reflect a change of tack following an unsuccessful fragmentation attempt. While research on both the common and different circumstances that lead to these related outcomes would greatly benefit the literature on rebel organizations, this issue falls outside the scope of the current analysis. As such, for the purposes of this study, I choose to conceptualize fragmentation narrowly, isolating it from other distinct, albeit related, outcomes

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[7]Similarly, Woldemariam (2018) defines fragmentation as "an event where a segment of a rebel group formally and collectively exits that rebel organization and either (a) establishes a new rebel organization, (b) joins an existing rebel organization, or (c) joins the incumbent government" (25). I consider these three categories of fragmentation to embody meaningfully distinct processes and, thus, choose to focus on explaining the first of these types, the establishment of a new rebel organization.

of interest.

Like Kenny (2010), I conceptualize structural integrity as the property of an organization remaining unified under a common operational banner and leadership (Kenny 2010). As such, the opposite of structural integrity is fragmentation, which refers to the splitting of an organization into two or more independent competing organizations. Fragmentation is distinct from disintegration, which refers only to individual or group dissension or desertion. While disintegration does reflect leadership failure, it is of a different kind entirely and deserves its own effort of explanation. Relatedly, structural cohesion is difference from "the prevalence of internal conditions which make effective military operations difficult, if not, in some cases, impossible. These conditions are desertion, mutiny, assassination of leaders, and other factors, such as drug usage, which destroy discipline and combat effectiveness" (Gabriel and Savage 1978).

## The Logic of Fragmentation

In the section, I outline a leader-based, organizational theory of rebel fragmentation. The splintering of rebel groups in recent and ongoing insurgencies suggests that fragmentation reflects a belief among senior subcommanders that the group leader is incapable of delivering on their political, military, or material commitments. A motion of no confidence. To be clear, I offer an explanation for fragmentation which does try to explain a rebel leader's ability to win, overall, but their capacity to maintain a unified campaign throughout the conflict.

To account for the intra-group dynamics that lead to rebel fragmentation, I highlight the interaction between two sets of rebel group members. The first set is rebel leaders. Similar to Prorok (2016), I use the term "rebel leader" to refer to the individual that is most responsible for exercising power in a rebel organization, not just the operations commander or organizational figurehead. If rebel leaders are responsible for the effective management and

cohesion of their organizations, organizational fragmentation must represent some perceived failure in their leadership performance. For example, Bacon and Arsenault (2017) argue that Osama bin Laden's "greatest strength as the leader of Al Qaeda was the masterful way in which he cultivated and reinforced internal and external unity, successfully managing difficult personalities within his group and within allied groups" (2). Conceptualized thus, the origins of organizational fragmentation can be investigated according to a leader's characteristics and capacity for leadership.

The second set of actors central to the process of fragmentation is rebel subcommanders. I use the term "subcommander" to refer to any person at an intermediate level of authority in the rebel organization, especially those at a level just under the rebel leader. In effect, these are the individuals to whom rebel leaders delegate, in part, the management of armed battalions, political and social programs, diplomatic missions, logistics, and intelligence operations (Lidow 2016; Shapiro 2013). Armed rebellion is a massive undertaking; by default, most rebel leaders are compelled to delegate responsibility to carefully-selected lieutenants— e.g. UNITA General Geraldo Muengo "Kamorteiro" or ISIS commander Abu Abdulrahman al-Bilawi. In practice, the vast majority of fragmentation episodes are instigated by one or multiple these subcommanders. For example, in 1994, a number of senior commanders of the Liberian NPFL rebel group, including Minister of Defense Tom Woewiyu, Minister of Justice Lavala Supuwood, and Minister of Internal Affairs Samuel Dokie led a splinter faction called the Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC). These three commanders—all of whom came from positions in the civilian administration of the group—also convinced military leader Nixon Gaye, who led the NPFL Marines Division, to join them (Lidow 2016: 123). The faction was short-lived; Charles Taylor captured and executed Gaye a year later.

After recruitment, subcommanders continue to update their beliefs about the competency of their leaders. This belief—and, subsequently, a rebel group's risk of fragmentation—is especially informed by the strategic and tactical decisions made by group leaders (McLauchlin

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and Pearlman 2012; Rudloff and Findley 2016). It is ranking subcommanders who make the critical decision to leave, form a competing faction, and covertly recruit fighters to their new organization. In this study, I make an important contribution to this story. I argue that this choice reflects a lack of confidence in the leader's capacity to match strategies and tactics to group objectives and, ultimately, to achieve victory. By treating subcommanders as rational decision makers, we gain theoretical clarity over the strategic decision to leave and form an alternative rebellion. The choice to split off from an active rebel group is clouded by high levels of uncertainty and risk. Accordingly, it must represent a strongly-held belief that the expected utility of creating an alternative rebel organization outweighs the expected utility of staying.[8]

A complete explanation of fragmentation, then, will need to specify both patterns of group leadership and how these patterns are likely to affect the beliefs of senior commanders in their organizations. This study argues that this calculation is informed by subcommanders' perceptions about the rebel leader's ability to deliver on their promises and achieve group objectives.[9] A number of studies (Woldemariam 2018, Lidow 2016, Fjelde and Nilsson 2018) and recent conflict cases—e.g. the SLM/A-MM in South Sudan, the OLF in Ethiopia, or the KNU in Myanmar—suggests the existence of some common flash points of fragmentation, such as the onset of peace talks or significant shifts in battlefield outcomes.[10] These also can

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[8]Relatedly, in a study on militant loyalties in the Central African Republic, Debos (2008) writes, "Political and military actors are continuously reconsidering their tactical loyalty to the regime. Their decision to join a rebellion or not depends on political calculations based on their perception of the situation and on their own ambition to achieve a better position within the security forces" (236).

[9]Lidow (2016) makes a similar point: "The effects of leader charisma and credibility also trickle down to the soldiers. When soldiers are inspired by the leader and believe in her long-term promises, their commanders feel increased pressure to follow the leader's orders...Credibility and charisma create positive incentives for discipline at every level of the organization, and decrease the opportunities for defection among the top commanders" (38).

[10]For instance, during the Central African Republic Bush War, the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP) rebel group entered into negotiations under the leadership of Abdoulaye Issene and eventually signed a ceasefire in 2011. Rejecting these efforts, CPJP commander Hassan Al Habib broke away to form a splinter faction, the Fundamental-CPJP, which went on the perpetuate the conflict by joining the ex-Seleka coalition. This is a common story.

be understood within my theoretical framework, where subcommanders take advantage of the information generated by these events to update their beliefs about their leader's ability to select effective and desirable battlefield and negotiation strategies. In this study, I focus on the broader relationship between leader type and fragmentation, generalizing about patterns of leadership across the ebb and flow of conflict events.

## Leadership and Rebel Fragmentation

The process of fragmentation should be ignited by pressure on the unique fault lines that correspond with the management styles of each leader type. Given my position that rebel leaders will mange their organizations differently based on their leader type, it stands to reason that rebel organizations will have organizational strengths and weaknesses that correspond with the decisions their leaders make in course of a rebel campaign. Accordingly, leaders unable to protect their organizations from pressure on these stress points will be more likely to suffer group fragmentation.[11] Of course, there are also universal stress points that prompt organizational fragmentation, regardless of leader type. Continued events of military defeat or lack of operational resources, in particular, will cause members of any rebel campaign to reconsider their prospects under the current leadership. I argue that considerable leverage can be gained over the puzzle of rebel fragmentation by evaluating the ways in which these common threats to group structural integrity demonstrate varying effects on different

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[11]In this dissertation, I focus explicitly on the fragmentation of rebel organizations (Rudloff and Findley 2016; Tamm 2016; Woldemariam 2016). Another set of studies consider the process of fragmentation through a different unit of analysis: insurgent *movements*. Rebel movements are sets of active rebel organizations mobilized around a collective identity in pursuit of particular interests related to this identity in a fundamental way (Mosinger 2017; Cunningham, Bakke and Seymour 2012; Bakke, Cunningham and Seymour 2012; McLauchlin and Pearlman 2012; Dowd 2015; Akcinaroglu 2012; Atlas and Licklider 1999). These studies seek to explain why rebel groups with similar objectives choose to operate competitively—and how this dynamic affects conflict outcomes. Higher levels of movement fragmentation are associated with prolonged conflict, higher levels of violence, and conflict recurrence following settlement. While such studies make important contributions to the broader story of civil conflict, we should expect explanations of group fragmentation to identify different sets of casual mechanisms. Though analyses of fragmentation in rebel movements and rebel organizations will inevitably involve many of the same predictors, we must be especially careful not to blur conceptual lines.

types of leaders. Group fragmentation is deeply connected to the strategic exchange between conflict actors, so much so that it can only be accurately described an outcome endogenous to conflict and organizational dynamics. A rebel group's structural integrity reflects decisions made by group leaders with respect to organizational design, resource allocation, and military strategy. Accordingly, leader-based explanations of group fragmentation must clarify how different leader types are related to these known precedents of rebel fragmentation.

## Military Experience and Fragmentation

While often presented in news media as military figures, brandishing Kalashnikovs and fatigues, many rebel leaders do not have meaningful military backgrounds. Building on existing studies on the military performance and fragmentation, I propose at least two reasons to believe that a leader's military experience shapes rebel organizations' proclivity to fragmentation. First, rebel groups with leaders who have prior military experience should be better able to convince their followers of their ability to achieve military objectives—and, indeed, will emphasize military means to achieve group objectives (Willingham 2017). Sustained experiences of military defeat cause members of a rebel campaign to reconsider their immediate and future prospects of achieving their objectives (Christia 2012). Woldemariam (2011) puts it succinctly,

> In settings where a rebel organization is losing territory, often through a set of major shocks, the incentives to cooperate are reduced, as battlefield losses suggest that the collective enterprise that is organized rebellion no longer guarantees the survival of the organizations constituent units. Put differently, losing territory prompts an organizations constituent units to question the cooperative bargain that is at the heart of the rebel organization. All things equal, fragmentation is more likely in such contexts (3-4).

I argue that leaders with a military background should be more resilient to fragmentation. First, a leader's personal military experience should enable them to better execute a critical responsibility of insurgent management: the war campaign. Accordingly, all else equal, these leaders will enjoy higher levels of confidence in their ability to lead, muting subcommanders' desire to create a competing splinter faction. Conversely, leaders without tangible military experience may suffer greater doubt in their capacity to lead. For example, within the first two months of the Liberia Civil War, Prince Yormie Johnson led a from the ranks of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). At the onset of the conflict, Taylor had only just emerged from a training camp in Libya sponsored by Muamar Gaddafi. Conversely, Prince Y. Johnson was a military veteran who had served in the Liberian Armed Forces. Citing frustration with the absence of infrastructure to carry out military operations and lack of trust in Taylor's ability to make good on his (extravagant) promises, Johnson broke from the NPFL with about 35 soldiers and formed the Independent NPFL (INPFL). The INPFL rapidly gained momentum, evolving into a formidable military force in western Liberia (Lidow 2016).

Second, leaders with a history of military activity draw on these experiences to build organizations with higher levels of discipline and centralization of command, both of which tend to be associated with greater group cohesion (Asal, Brown and Dalton 2012; Shapiro 2013). Inherently, leaders with military experience are exposed to and socialized into the strict norms of military command. Accordingly, as argued above, in the process of mobilizing, structuring, and managing their organizations, military-type leaders will aim to replicate these norms in their own rebel campaigns. For example, in a study on armed jihadist organizations in Africa, Hansen (2018) argues that many militant groups were able to maintain higher levels of cohesion during seasons of sustained counterinsurgent activity, in part, as a result of their organizational structure. Indeed, these organizations—led by individuals with years of military experience under their belt—often adopt more "traditional military-

like" structures (589). "The quality of the command hierarchy increases in its importance," Hansen finds, "as it plays a greater role in the organization's cohesion" (601). Based on these mechanisms, I propose the following testable hypothesis.

**Hypotheses 7**: All else equal, rebel groups led by leaders with prior military experience will be less likely to fragment than those led by leaders without prior military experience.

## Motive and Fragmentation

Rebel groups which operate primarily for the purposes of profit are especially prone to fragmentation (Lidow 2016; Weinstein 2007). First, as these groups operate on a basis of monetary reinforcement, these will be less In cases where rebel lieutenants have an opportunity to breakaway to increase their profits, they are likely to do so where the leader cannot provide suitable incentive or threat to maintain their loyalty. For these organizations, a lieutenant's commitment is only as strong as their next paycheck. Unable to offer cash incentives or credible future rewards, "these leaders often allow their troops to loot locals in exchange for a minimum level of loyalty and are thus less able to prevent fractionalization" (Lidow 2016: 7). While some of these leaders may be successful in this endeavor, I argue these will have a greater probability of suffering fundamental challenges to their leadership which may result in fragmentation.

Second, and relatedly, groups strictly built around monetary incentive structures are likely to feature weaker norms of cooperation and socialization. Cohesion in these groups is a function of punishment and monetary incentives. In the absence of being able to credibly commitment to these, leaders will be vulnerable to fragmentation. Conversely, leaders who articulate the cause for war around a common or public good will be more successful at building cohesion without distributing pecuniary goods or issuing threats of punishment. For

example, Rui de Pinto, a mid-level commander in the Angolan People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) forces during the Angolan War for independence (1961–1974), expresses how the group, whose leadership under Agostino Neto and, later, Jose Eduardo dos Santos relied on indoctrination and ideological training to maintain discipline and cohesion. During this war, the MPLA leadership exhibited no evidence of personal material profit; rather, it mobilized support around a generally inclusive platform of Angolan nationalism. Evidence of the strength of its socialization norms, MPLA units would hold "self-criticism" meetings, during which time group members would discuss their own shortcomings:

> ....there were always difficulties and problems coming up and it would not have been possible to solve these with only external discipline. For example, we were allowed to leave the camp to walk around on several hours on Sundays—just to talk around a bit and so on. It sometimes happened that a comrade would return a bit late. But no one would come up to him and say: "You are late, why?" No, it was not necessary. The comrade would come forward himself and say, "I am late" and explain his reasons. (Pinto 1973: 84)

Based on these differences, I expect that groups led by profit-seeking individuals will be more susceptible to fragment in the face of external conflict pressures, all else equal.

**Hypotheses 8**: All else equal, rebel groups led by leaders motivated by private goods will be more likely to fragment.

## Rebel Leader Type and Fragmentation

Based on the logic of fragmentation and the specific leadership dimensions emphasized in the previous section, I describe my theoretical expectations for how these leadership charac-

teristics interact—thereby producing the four leader types—to result in discernible risks of fragmentation.

First, I expect the Insurgent to be the most robust to the risks of fragmentation. This leader's motivation for conflict, an articulated public good, should result in higher levels of cohesion as they recruit and train fighters committed to the group's long-term objectives. This resiliency to fragmentation should be further augmented by the Insurgent's military experience, which enables them to be more effective on the battlefield, on average. As a result, the Insurgent's fighters and, more importantly, their lieutenants should both be less likely to lose faith in the leader and more strongly socialized into the organization.

Second, because the Ideologue is more likely to recruit and attract followers with higher levels of commitment to the group's cause, I expect that they also be more resilient to the pressures that sometimes incite militants to split into factions. However, the Ideologue's lack of military experience may cause them, all else equal, to mishandle the management of the military campaign essential to achieving their group's objectives.

Third, I expect that the Warlord will be especially prone to fragmentation due to their motive for conflict, though this dynamic is mitigated by the Warlord's military acumen. That is, while this leader type is likely to attract "opportunists" in both the rank-and-file and higher echelons of the organizations, as a military veteran the Warlord will be more effective at establishing stronger centralized command structures and practices of discipline. Moreover, their experiences should make them more effective battlefield commanders, engendering greater confidence in their capacity to lead.

Finally, the Operator should be the most susceptible to fragmentation of all leader types. Their profiteering-motive invites fragmentation led by lieutenants who find opportunity for greater revenue outside of the organization. Relatedly, their organizations should tend to feature weak levels of socialization and, thus, cohesion. This latent risk of fragmentation is compounded by the Operator's lack of military experience. As a result, the Operator may

struggle to instill, at minimum, formal practices of discipline and punishment for disobedience or challenges to their leadership. Discipline for the Operator is a direct function of steady revenues and the sufficient distribution of those means to eager lieutenants. I summarize the expected relationship between leader type and fragmentation below.

**Summary of Fragmentation Hypotheses:** *Insurgent < Ideologue < Warlord < Operator.*

## 3.4   Summary

If leaders matter in situations of armed intrastate conflict, we should first observe their effects at the organizational level. Only from this point can we begin to connect rebel leadership to broader conflict processes and outcomes. In this chapter, I have argued that leaders manage and organize their groups in distinguishable patterns. The result is that the rebel organizations we observe in war take different forms and feature unique vulnerabilities to fragmentation.

# Chapter 4

# The Rebel Leaders in Civil War Data, 1989-2014

To test this theory, I use the Rebel Leaders in Civil War Dataset (RLCW). These data offer scholars the means to connect these individual actors directly to outcomes of interest through empirical analysis. Overall, RLCW contains information on 206 rebel leaders from 157 rebel groups across 65 intrastate conflicts from 1989 to 2014. Temporal variation is measured annually. In total, the data contain 1,411 units of observation.[1]

Similar to Prorok (2016), we identify the individual that is most responsible for exercising power in a rebel organization, not just an operations commander or organizational figure-head.[2] To code rebel leaders, RLCW coders referenced a broad collection of source materials using a set of systematic coding guidelines. Data on rebel leaders are sourced from hundreds

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[1] For more information please contact Austin Doctor at austin.doctor@eku.edu or see the RLCW codebook included in the appendix. The RLCW data project reflects a collaborative effort between myself and John D. Willingham, my colleague at the University of Georgia. As such, in this chapter, I will refer to "we" to reflect the joint effort that has gone into the creation, maintenance, and expansion of this data project.

[2] The sample of the rebel groups featured in this RLCW come from the UCDP One-sided Violence Dataset (Melander, Pettersson and Themnér 2016). Future versions of the data are in development and will expand beyond this sample of rebel actors. For more information on coding guidelines and the data, please see the included appendix.

of government reports, news publications, academic case studies, historical accounts, and conflict expert reports. Data taken from secondary sources were corroborated by rebel group publications, rebel leader interviews, and other primary sources, when available. Importantly, coding assignments were assigned to multiple coding teams, completed independently, and reconciled through tests of inter-coder reliability.

In this chapter, I describe the relevant features of RLCW, outline their coding processes, and offer descriptive trends in the data.

## 4.1 Motivation for Data Effort

Often missing from the literature on intrastate war is the rebel leader. Leadership roles are examined in studies of interstate war (Horowitz, Stam and Ellis 2015), but a relatively small body of research explores leadership effects in *intrastate* war. Overwhelmingly, these studies focus on the roles of government decision makers. In contrast, rebel commanders are often approached as a unitary set of actors, who operate on the periphery of the battlefield. As a result, existing studies emphasize structure over individual agency in war. To be sure, a nascent literature has given rebel leaders some agency in shaping conflict dynamics. For instance, rebel leaders are mentioned explicitly in studies on rebel recruitment (Gates 2002), duration (Prorok 2016), civilian victimization (Mason 2004; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006), organization (Shapiro 2012; Haer 2015), and decision making (Weinstein 2007; Lidow 2016). Due to data restrictions, however, these studies have been limited in scope—especially treating rebel leaders as a monolith—and their ability to test the broader implications of leadership in scenarios of intrastate war.

Individual entities operating within environmental structures of incentives and constraints are systematically ignored in favor of singularly-focused meso and macro-level explanations of conflict. This is a puzzling lacuna in the intrastate conflict literature, especially given that a

number of interstate war scholars find evidence of leaders playing a critical role in driving the dynamics of international interactions (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Chiozza and Goemans 2011; Horowitz, Stam and Ellis 2015). Similar to a number of past approaches, we argue that disentangling the interplay of agents and structures is critical to understanding political change and conflict (Most and Starr 1989; Berejikian 1992; Mason 2004; Weinstein 2007; Marten 2007). Fundamentally, I view rebel leaders as important decision makers operating within a larger structure of constraints and incentives. This is a significant departure from the current literature on intrastate war dynamics. Accordingly, I ask the following critical questions: (1) what role do rebel leaders play in shaping conflict dynamics and outcomes and (2) do their individual characteristics and experiences affect their capacity for leadership? The RLCW dataset is the first step to helping scholars answer these empirical and important questions.

## 4.2   The Data

RLCW contains information on the agents who lead armed opposition campaigns, rebel organizations, and the unique structural constraints they encounter at the conflict level. Specifically, RLCW contains information on 206 rebel leaders from 157 rebel groups operating across 42 countries in 65 intrastate conflicts from 1989 to 2014. As described in the previous section, rebel leaders are conceptualized according to their motive for conflict and their prior military experience, resulting in four distinct types—the Ideologue, the Insurgent, the Operator, and the Warlord. RLCW observations are recorded at the rebel-year level of analysis.[3] In total, the data contains 1,411 units of observation. Descriptive statistics of key

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[3]In some cases, we record the same leader presiding over different rebel groups at different times. For example, in the Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005), Dr. Reik Machar broke from John Garang's SPLA to form a splinter faction, the SPLA-Nasir 1991. He exited this position of leadership in 1997, signing a the Khartoum Peace Agreement with the Sudanese government. From 1997 to 2002, Machar led the a pro-government militia, the Sudan People's Defense Forces (SPDF), which he later merged with John Garang's SPLA rebel

quantitative variables are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 4.1: RLCW Descriptive Statistics, 1989–2014

| Statistic | N | Mean | St. Dev. | Min | Pctl(25) | Pctl(75) | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ideologue | 1,411 | 0.368 | 0.482 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Insurgent | 1,411 | 0.386 | 0.487 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Operator | 1,411 | 0.063 | 0.243 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Warlord | 1,411 | 0.183 | 0.387 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Founder | 1,411 | 0.556 | 0.497 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Entry | 1,410 | 4.110 | 1.396 | 1.000 | 4.000 | 4.000 | 9.000 |
| Tenure | 1,411 | 5.989 | 5.091 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 26 |
| LeaderID | 1,411 | 106.887 | 56.741 | 1 | 61.5 | 152 | 206 |
| Year | 1,411 | 2,002.221 | 7.076 | 1,989 | 1,996 | 2,008 | 2,014 |

## Leadership Variables

In addition to identifying a set of 206 active rebel leaders from 1989 to 2014, RLCW includes information on seven key variables relevant to these actors. There are summarized in Table 4.2 and described briefly below.

Table 4.2: Leadership Information in RLCW

| Military | Political | Motive | Leader Type | Entry | Exit | Tenure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Active service | Political party | Public good | Ideologue | Election | Abdicate | [1:26] |
| Combat experience | Political office | Private good | Insurgent | Seizure | Ousted | |
| Formal training | | | Operator | Founder: faction | Imprisoned/exiled | |
| | | | Warlord | Founder: original | Assassinated | |
| | | | | Appointment | Killed in action | |
| | | | | Military succession | Group exit | |

RLCW codebook available in online appendix.

## Military Background

Although political skill is a necessary component for successful leadership in armed intrastate conflict, it is not sufficient. Insurgency, after all, is both a political and military contest. As such, capable leaders must be able to match military outcomes to political objectives.[4] As

forces. Machar is later recorded in RLCW as the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO) forces in the South Sudanese Civil War (2013–present).

[4]Sechser (2004) and Horowitz, Stam and Ellis (2015) find evidence that a state leader's military experience shapes decision-making with respect to the use of force. For Shapiro (2013), leaders of insurgent organizations are vital to an organization's military operations. Furthermore, Talmadge (2015) argues that leaders play

such, we code for a rebel leader's military experiences prior to conflict onset. In RLCW, a leader's military experience is determined by three factors: combat experience, formal military training, and prior service in a state military. Each of these three indicators acts as an independent switch, where if any is present in a leader's history, we code that leader as having military experience. IN RLCW, 105 rebel leaders have some form of military experience. More specifically, 44 have prior military service, 130 have prior combat experience, and 95 have formal military training.

## Political Background

We also suspect that a rebel leader's prior experience in domestic politics will affect their capacity to lead, their approach to achieving group objectives, and their vision for the post-conflict political landscape. The degree of a leader's prior political experience is identified with two binary indicator variables: experience as head of a national political party or holding national political office. Some rebel leaders emerge at conflict onset with little introduction, being relatively uninvolved in the pre-war political sphere. Others are well-known opposition politicians or regime officials. The pre-war origins of rebel leaders not only matter, they vary dramatically both within and across conflict contexts. RLCW records 39 rebel leaders with some form of prior political experience. Of these, 22 were formerly the head of a political party and 28 are coded as having previously served in national political office.

## Motive for Conflict

We conceptualize leader motives as goal-setting values that shape strategic direction and, in turn, affect tactical selection in areas of recruitment, mobilization, and combat. In RLCW, a rebel leader's motive is operationalized according to the leader's primary interest in either

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an important role in promoting military effectiveness through the implementation of promotion patterns, command structures, and training regimens.

public goods or private goods. Such a distinction has a long history in the discipline (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Weinstein 2007) where "An organization's initial stock of economic and social endowments and its decisions about how to utilize them may be themselves a function of leadership, ideology, and strategy" (Weinstein 2007: 328). While a leader's true motive is latent, we evaluate our sources for indicators of a leader's values. Specifically, we look at a group's established payoff structures and evidence of systematic personal profiteering to reveal a leader's motive for perpetuating an insurgent campaign.[5] Specifically, in the spirit of Weinstein (2007), we look at group payoff structures and evidence of personal profiteering to reveal a leader's motive for instigating and sustaining a military campaign. In total, 55 of the 206 leaders are coded as being motivated by personal profit through extraction at some point during their tenure.

**Rebel Leader Type**

The RLCW dataset offers a measure of rebel leader type. We measure variation in rebel leader type according to two dimensions described above: a leader's motivation for conflict and their prior military experience. These intersecting dimensions result in four rebel leader ideal types: the Ideologue, the Insurgent, the Operator, and the Warlord. As described in Figure 4.1, the data feature 94 Ideologues, 68 Insurgents, 33 Operators, and 43 Warlords.

**Nature of Entry**

How do leaders come to lead a rebel organization in the first place? RLCW includes information on the nature of an individual's entry into leadership. Specifically, we code for instances in which a rebel leader is a founding leader, a commander of a splinter organization, elected

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[5]Rebel leaders are considered "innocent until proven guilty." That is, we assume rebel leaders are motivated by public goods until evidence suggests otherwise. Accordingly, we specifically look for evidence of personal profit, distributions of monetary "bonuses" to loyal sub-commanders, the systematic extortion of civilian populations, and the use of coerced recruitment.
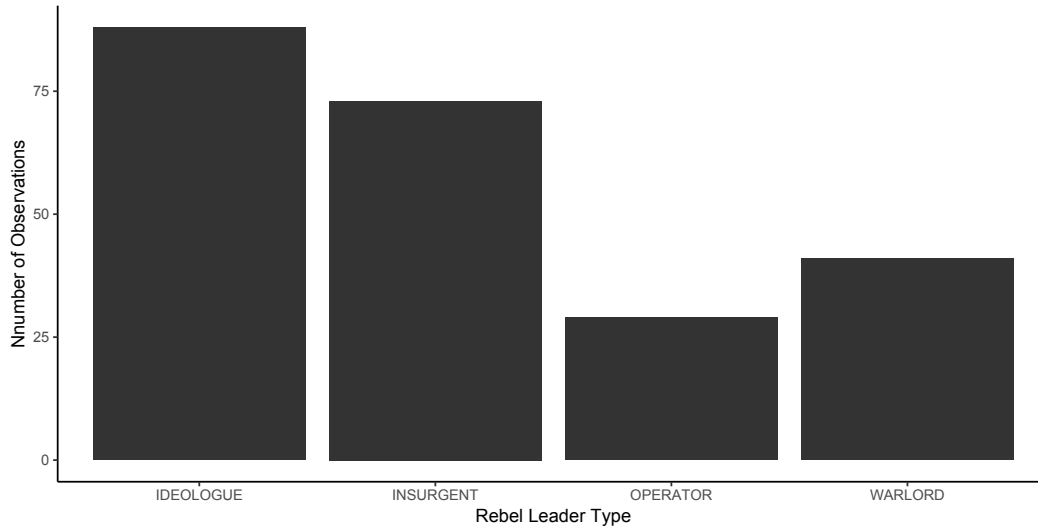
Figure 4.1: Distribution of Rebel Leader Type, 1989-2014

through committee or executive appointment, seized power by force, led the merger of multiple pre-existing armed groups, or was promoted by military succession, or unknown. Not all rebel leaders are "founders"; many come to leadership in the midst of an active campaign. However, the means by which the transition of power occurs varies significantly. Some leaders are appointed to replace dead, captured, or ineffectual ones. For example, after the targeted killing of Taliban leader Akhtar Mohammad Mansour in 2016, cleric Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada took over leadership of the organization. According to the Taliban spokesperson, Akhundzada was "appointed" directly by Mansour in his will—and this appointment was unanimously confirmed by the Taliban shura council. Another common form of leadership entry in RLCW is the creation of splinter factions, where an enterprising or disgruntled subcommader leaves a rebel group to create their own competing organization. According to Woldemariam (2011), nearly one-third of his sampled rebel groups in Sub-Saharan Africa experienced fragmentation at some point. Fragmentation is hardly unique to the African continent; it presents perennial threat to rebel organizations in conflicts around the world.

In RLCW, most rebel leaders are founders. Specifically, 16 are coded as being elected

to power by group members, 8 seize power through a coup, 111 are coded as founders of an original group, 38 are coded as founders of a splinter faction, 5 are appointed directly by the former leader, 6 emerge through military succession, 3 through the forming of a coalition of pre-existing groups, and 19 are unknown.

## Nature of Exit

We also code for the nature of a rebel leader's exit from a conflict. We distinguish between abdication, ouster, imprisonment, external versus internal assassination, death by natural causes, killed in action, group defeat, cooptation within a larger coalition, and group exit. In this version of the data, RLCW does not provide information on the nature of a group's exit (e.g. victory, ceasefire, peace agreement, defeat, though we hope to add this item in future versions. In RLCW, 16 leaders abdicate their position, 12 are ousted by group members, 23 are imprisoned by the government, 17 are assassinated by counterinsurgent forces, 3 are assassinated by group members, 6 die of natural causes, 14 are killed in action, 58 leave due to group exit, 10 are subsumed by merging with other rebel groups, and 6 leave to take up political office.

## Leader Tenure

Finally, RLCW offers a measure the duration of a rebel leader's tenure in a conflict campaign. In RLCW leadership tenure ranges from 1 year to 26 with a median tenure of 4 years and a mean of 5.99. The median tenure length varies between leader types, but only marginally: Ideologues have a median tenure of 4 years, Insurgents have a median tenure of 5 years, Operators have median tenure of 3 years, and Warlords have a median tenure of 5 years.

## 4.3 Collecting Data on Rebel Leaders

RLCW identifies and classifies rebel leaders of armed non-state groups between 1989 and 2014. Similar to *ARCHIGOS* (Goemans, Gleditsch and Chiozza 2009) and *LEAD* Horowitz, Stam and Ellis (2015), by effective rebel leader, we mean the individual that is most responsible for exercising power in a rebel organization, not just the operations commander or organizational figurehead.[6] To code rebel leaders, RLCW coders referenced a broad collection of source materials using a set of systematic coding guidelines. Data on rebel leaders are sourced from hundreds of government reports, news publications, academic case studies, historical accounts, and conflict expert reports. Data taken from secondary sources were corroborated by rebel group publications, rebel leader interviews, and other primary sources, when available. Importantly, coding assignments were assigned to multiple coding teams, completed independently, and reconciled.

The RLCW data project is the product of a two year effort involving two principal directors and a team of nearly 50 coding assistants at the University of Georgia. In addition to its use for this dissertation project, RLCW will allow other conflict scholars to test their generalizable theories involving the effects that rebel leaders bring to bear on conflict dynamics and outcomes of interest. RLCW offers a categorical measure of rebel leader type, which can take one of four values: Ideologue, Insurgent, Operator, or Warlord. RLCW also includes a number of additional variables relevant to the rebel leader and conflict environment. Table 4.3 illustrates the coding scheme used to classify rebel leaders.

The procedure for identifying rebel leaders and their type follows a systematic process. First, we consult any available case studies and historical accounts. Such resources include

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[6]This is an important point of distinction. For example, the leader of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in Indonesia, Hassan di Tiro, was exiled to Stockholm, Sweden for most of the 1980s and 1990s. However, the operational commander on the ground, Ishak Daud, reportedly called di Tiro by telephone every morning for daily instruction (Schulze 2007: 88). In this case, though not present on the battlefield, di Tiro continued to run operations from afar and controlled the decision making process. Accordingly, we code Hassan di Tiro as the rebel leader of GAM even though he was not living in Indonesia for the majority of the Aceh conflict.

Table 4.3: Coding Rebel Leaders

| Rebel Leader | Motive | | Military Experience | | | Rebel Leader |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Name (Year) | Private Goods | Public Goods | Service | Training | Combat | Type |
| B. MEHSUD (2008) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | INSURGENT |
| K. JANJALANI (2005) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | WARLORD |
| M.P. MARTINEZ (1994) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | IDEOLOGUE |
| C. TAYLOR (1991) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | OPERATOR |
| R. MACHAR (1992) | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | WARLORD |
| H. HATTAB (2000) | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | INSURGENT |
| A.A. AL-MASRI (2006) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | IDEOLOGUE |
| M. ISHAQ (2011) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | OPERATOR |

Examples taken from RLCW.

expert texts like Christia's Alliance Formation in Civil Wars (2013), a thorough analysis of the civil wars in Afghanistan (1992-1998) and Bosnia (1992-1995); Wood's Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador (2003), an excellent case study of opposition groups in the Salvadoran Civil War (1980-1992); Stearns's Dancing in the Glory of Monsters (2011), a robust, empirical account of the Second Congo War (1998-2003); and Lidow's Violent Order (2016), an excellent description and analysis of the Liberian Civil War from 1989-2005. Second, we evaluate a number of journalist, non-government organization, and government reports on a specific conflict, rebel group, or rebel leader. Commonly referenced sources include: BBC News, Reuters, New York Times, VICE News, Human Rights Watch, U.S. State Department Country Reports, and the International Criminal Court, Jane's World Insurgency & Terrorism (2005). These organizations provide invaluable, (often) daily updates via on-the-ground sources. Moreover, they are often the first to publish one-on-one interviews with rebel leaders or transcripts of speeches by rebel leaders. These are critical to identifying the motives of the leader and getting a sense of their relationships with other rebel organizations in the conflict. Finally, we verify the findings acquired in the previous stages with other expert, third-party expert sources, such as Stanford's Mapping Militants program, Maryland's START program, and the Council of Foreign Relations Backgrounders reports. In cases where there is disagreement between these sources and our own findings, we re-confirm the coded values with our set of primary and secondary sources.

In the majority of cases, the identity of the rebel leader is clear. That is, most cases are not clouded by disparate accounts of rebel leader identification. In fact, the set of unclear cases comprise less than 3% of the cases evaluated in the RLCW project. In general, the "cloudiest" cases are those with a committee ruling structure, especially in Communist rebel groups. In such instances, when information is available, we code the committee chairman as the leader of the rebel organization. Of the leaders identified, we have been able to classify their type according to the dimensions of the RLCW typology. For less than 2% of identified rebel leaders, information is not available to classify their type. All in all, the wide availability of information on rebel leaders in conflict campaigns across the world is supportive of our claim that these actors are critical components of the intrastate conflict environment.

## 4.4    Trends, Distribution, and Descriptives

Taking a look under the hood, I use this section to demonstrate the distribution of key variables over time and space. Figure 5.4 displays information on the distribution of rebel leaders across the temporal range of the data by leader type, 1989 to 2014. This figure suggests the total number of active rebel leaders peaked in 2004. There is meaningful variation in the proportion and number of rebel leader type over time. Generally speaking, the leaders motivated by public goods—Ideologues and Insurgents—are more frequently observed that those leaders motivated by private goods—Operators and Warlords. That said, no single leader type dominates the sampled distribution of rebel leaders over time.

Figure 4.3 displays the total number of rebel leaders (a) and conflicts, groups, and leaders (b) in five global regions. In RLCW, we record more rebel leaders in Africa, followed closely by Asia, then the Middle East. Europe and Latin America have the fewest number of recorded actors and conflicts, though it is likely that these regions are underrepresented in
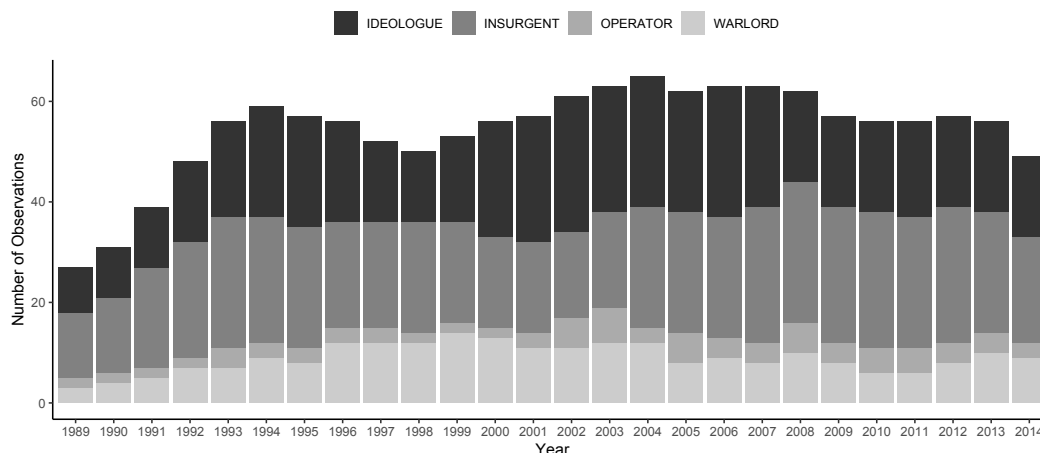
Figure 4.2: Distribution of Rebel Leader Type Over Time, 1989-2014

our sample. The African continent has the most of each category. Interestingly, the number of conflicts in Africa is not much greater than Asia, the second most conflict-prone region in the data. This number of rebel leaders and rebel groups present in African conflicts, however, is much higher than in Asia. This suggests that African conflicts are the most likely to have multiple rebel groups present or be the most fragmented. In contrast, no European conflict listed in RLCW is recorded with multiple rebel groups, though most of these rebel groups experienced some turnover in leadership—a higher rate than any region other than Latin America. This may suggest that pre-war structural factors, e.g. the strength of domestic institutions, may have an impact not just on the probability of conflict onset, but on how many players take part once the fighting starts.

In Figure 4.4, I display the distribution of rebel leaders by country. The average number of rebel leaders recorded in a country during our time range is 4.77. Correspondingly, 16 of the 43 countries included in RLCW feature only one rebel leader. India and the Democratic Republic of Congo feature the most rebel leaders in the sample, both having 24 from 1989–2014. With respect to the four-part typology of rebel leadership, the average country in

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(a) All Leaders by Region

(b) Conflicts, Groups, and Leaders by Region
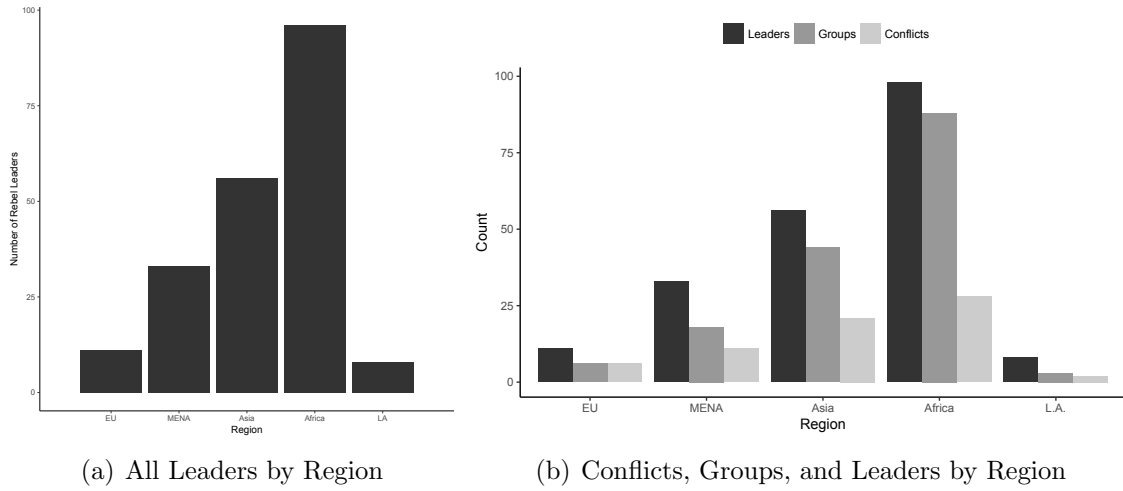
Figure 4.3: Distribution of Rebel Leaders by Region, 1989-2014
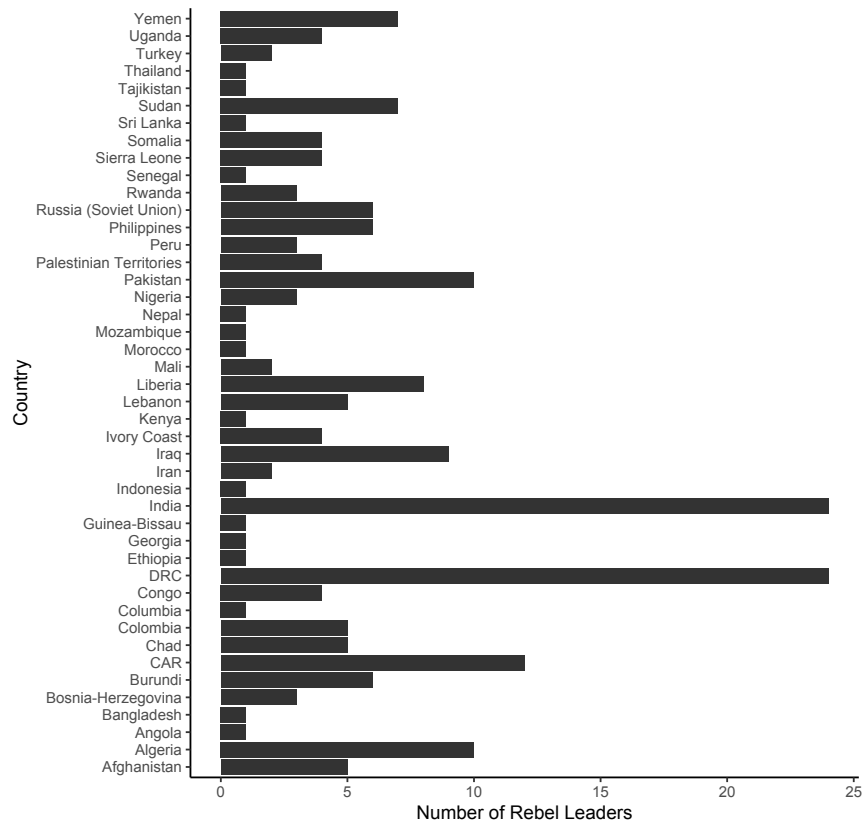


Figure 4.4: Distribution of Rebel Leaders by Country, 1989-2014

our data features 2.06 types and 7 of the conflicts feature all four types. This suggests that the emergence of leadership type is not path-determined by the location and context of the conflict. Rather different leader types likely follow unique pathways to war.

## 4.5   Conclusion

The Rebel Leaders in Civil War Dataset is an attempt to conceptualize, identify, and measure the individuals who emerge in positions of rebel leadership based on their personal characteristics before during war. We believe this represents the first endeavor of its kind. It is my hope that this resource will encourage more scholars to focus their questions and empirical strategies on the true microfoundations of armed conflict and organized violence. serves the academic community for years to come.

Efforts to expand this dataset beyond its initial sample of rebel leaders are underway. It is also the desire of the project's directors to expand the temporal scope to more recent years.

# Chapter 5

# Trends in the Management of Rebel Organizations, 1989–2014

I test the presented testable hypotheses using the Rebel Leaders in Civil War Dataset. The chapter continues as follows. First, I describe the methods by which I test the theory outlined in the previous chapter and present the results of my statistical analysis, the first stage of my research design. Second, I specify the measurement and distribution of the main and controlling variables used the statistical models. thirds, I present and interpret the findings of each model. Finally, I conclude with a more discussion of the results, viewing them more holistically.

## 5.1 Research Design

The study of rebel leaders, intrastate war, and the organization of rebellion is clouded by causal complexity. Further, very little analysis has been conducted towards explicating the role that rebel leaders play in managing insurgency. Accordingly, a two part analysis is appropriate. Though not a nested analysis—the units of analysis differ slightly—my two-

part mixed methods approach combines two symbiotic inferential tools that fill gaps left by the other. I will use statistical regression analysis to test the generalizability of my proposed hypotheses, and will complement my rigorous quantitative analyses with an in-depth qualitative investigation into the organizational management, structure, and cohesion of the Angolan UNITA rebels. Despite the attraction of statistical methods for the analysis of conflict processes, without qualitative information, it is difficult to interpret the results and identify where incongruities or ambiguities lie in the statistical tests. Accordingly, each component is essential to the completion of this dissertation. Indeed, I am convinced—as Thaler (2017) puts it—that "mixed methods studies of violence and conflict give us as social scientists the opportunity to conduct research that both satisfies the criteria of social scientific inquiry and provides more useful and complete information for policy makers and practitioners" (71).

## Statistical Component

The statistical analysis in this chapter can be divided into two portions, corresponding to the two outcomes of interest: group structure and cohesion. To test the effects of leader type on the likelihoods that a group adopts a centralized or specialized structure, I use traditional binary logistic regression models. To estimate the relationship between leader type and group size I take two approaches. First, I construct an ordinal measure of group size and use an ordinal logistical regression model. Second, I transform the count of group size, which has a skewed distribution, by the natural log and use an OLS regression model. Of course, the use of data with a panel structure—featuring repeated responses of the same individuals—presents a number of challenges to the common assumptions of regression analysis, such as the prevalence of non-independent errors and unit effects. These issues are addressed and discussed in the results section as well. The results from the statistical portion of the research

design are presented in this chapter.

## Qualitative Component

The qualitative component of this dissertation is comprised of a case study of the UNITA rebel group and its leader Jonas Savimbi during the Angola Civil War. The qualitative information used for this case study comes from a number of semi-structured interviews which I conducted with former rebels in Angola in Summer 2018. The interviews lasted between thirty minutes and four hours, and prompted for information about group structure, operations, recruitment patterns, and leadership. The information gleaned in these interviews provide qualitative depth to complement my quantitative analysis and enhance the reliability of the causal inference acquired in this study. The interviews are essential to the completion of a comparative case analysis framed by my theoretical approach (Lieberman 2005). The innovative conceptualization of rebel leadership and its essential tasks featured in this dissertation demands verification of the mechanisms specified in my argument.

Why have I selected UNITA for in-depth analysis? First, the UNITA case—which many existing accounts suggest was strongly influenced by structural conditions and coopted by external actors—presents a "most difficult" test of my underlying argument: that rebel leaders exert independent agency on organizational behavior in predictable patterns. By demonstrating how Savimbi navigated and manipulated his severe environmental conditions, I offer evidence that leader-based explanations can provide useful empirical leverage. Second, this case provides the additional benefits of offering an in-depth analysis of a conflict that is systematically under-sampled by the comparative conflict and Africanist literature (Briggs 2017).[1] In a recent survey of the distribution of African case study subjects from 1993 to 2013, Briggs (2017) finds that Angola is represented in only 9 published works—less than

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[1] Notable exceptions include Huang (2016), Thaler (2012), Pearce (2015), and Seymour (2000).

one percent of the studies in their data sample.[2]

In Angola, I conducted a total of 33 interviews. My target population were those fighters and commanders who served under Jonas Savimbi during the Angolan Civil War, a real population of more than 150,000. In particular, I focused on those persons who served at some point in the highest echelon of leadership in the organization during that time, a real population I believe to comprise roughly 50 persons. On average, each interview lasted roughly two hours. Due to a family emergency, one was cut short after one hour. Another lasted four hours. My sampling method was a blend of *purposive* and *snowball* strategies. To establish the connections necessary to conduct these interviews, I began with a number of out-of-sample interviews reaching out to journalists, practitioners, and academics who had working experience in Angola during the civil war. I developed this out-of-sample sample based on my own reading of the published work relating to the Angolan Civil War. These persons put me in touch with individuals who would eventually make up my initial base sample of former UNITA commanders. Many of these interviewees were willing and able to connect me with other members of the the UNITA network. Based on this non-random sampling approach, I was able to gain access to a sufficiently developed collection of former commanders and fighters. It was important to me that my sample feature some degree of regional diversity. While the majority of my interviews were conducted in Luanda, I also travelled to a number of municipalities in the provinces of Huambo and Bié. These areas are especially salient as they are located in the heart of UNITA's traditional headquarters in the Central Highlands. As such, if my being based in Luanda, the traditional headquarters of the MPLA, would result in the biased sampling of those who may be more supportive of the current regime, my work in the central highlands is meant to counter-balance that dynamic.

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[2]In Briggs's analysis, the dependent variable is the number of times that a country was the subject of an article from 1993 to 2013, and it is drawn from a dataset introduced by Briggs (2017). The dataset records information on all research articles published by *African Affairs* and *The Journal of Modern African Studies* between 1993 and 2013.

The results from this component of the research design are presented in Chapter 6.

## 5.2   Measurement of Model Variables

The data sample contains information on 206 rebel leaders from 156 rebel groups operating across 42 countries in 65 intrastate conflicts from 1989 to 2014. As described in Chapter 4, rebel leaders are conceptualized according to their motive for conflict and their prior military experience, resulting in four distinct types—the Ideologue, the Insurgent, the Operator, and the Warlord. RLCW observations are recorded at the rebel-year level of analysis. In total, the overall data sample features 1,411 units of observation. However, due to considerable missingness in some of the dependent and controlling variables, the size of the sample varies across statistical models. Descriptive statistics of key quantitative variables are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Descriptive Statistics, 1989–2014

| Statistic | N | Mean | St. Dev. | Min | Pctl(25) | Pctl(75) | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fragmentation | 1,411 | 0.045 | 0.208 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Group Central | 532 | 0.803 | 0.398 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 1.000 | 1.000 |
| Specialized Wing | 573 | 0.182 | 0.386 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1.000 |
| Group Size | 1,298 | 8,183.904 | 14,915.810 | 72.000 | 1,000.000 | 8,500.000 | 116,000.000 |
| Duration | 1,411 | 9.822 | 6.710 | 1 | 4 | 14 | 26 |
| GroupAge | 1,411 | 7.846 | 6.262 | 1 | 3 | 11 | 26 |
| Tenure | 1,411 | 5.989 | 5.091 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 26 |
| Founder | 1,411 | 0.556 | 0.497 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Separatist | 1,411 | 0.389 | 0.488 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Terror | 1,411 | 0.487 | 0.500 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Group Age | 1,411 | 1.696 | 0.917 | 0 | 1.1 | 2.4 | 3 |
| Conflict Intensity | 1,411 | 568.274 | 1,672.729 | 0 | 0 | 467.5 | 32,937 |
| Population | 1,411 | 227,033,621.000 | 402,723,077.000 | 1,260,424 | 9,020,232 | 142,795,215 | 1,295,291,543 |

### Measurement of Dependent Variables

Data for the three key factors investigated in this study—centralization, specialization, and size—come from two existing data sources: the Non-State Actors Dataset Cunningham (2011)

and the Bad, Allied, and Dangerous Dataset (Asal, Brown and Dalton 2012).[3]

For the main analysis, information on *group centralization* is taken from the Bad, Allied, and Dangerous Dataset (version 2.0, Asal and Rethemeyer 2018). Based on this dataset, a binary indicator is used to indicate groups that have hierarchical leadership structures. Hierarchical is defined by the BAAD2 coding team as "a group with multiple leaders and is organized as a chain of command where ultimately the top leader has final power to issue/veto orders, but other leaders in the hierarchy may issue orders (usually tactical orders)." This is recorded at the group-year level. In my data sample, then, rebel groups are coded "1" when they have centralized command structures in a given year, and "0" otherwise. In total, 75 percent of my group-year observations are coded as having a centralized command structure. Importantly, this measure varies not only in theory, but in practice within rebel groups over the duration of a campaign. Figure 5.1 displays the independent distribution of this variable in my sample.

Information on *group specialization* comes from the Non-State Actors Dataset (Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan 2013), which records whether or not a rebel group creates a specialized political wing within its organizational structure. This variable does not, like the rest of the NSA data, vary over time. Rather this measure offers of a binary indicator for rebel groups which ever had an active political wing. In my data sample, 17 percent of group-year observations are recorded with an active political wing. Figure 5.2 displays the independent distribution of this variable in my sample.

Finally, I use information from the Non-State Actors Dataset to measure the size of a rebel group. Estimates of rebel group size are often clouded by the fog of war and are especially difficult to confirm. In order to address this relative degree of uncertainty, I create

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[3]Each offers unique advantages, where the NSA data matches the full temporal coverage of my sample, it contains notable missingness in the cross-sectional coverage of the rebel groups featured in RLCW. Conversely, the BAAD2 data only cover insurgent and terrorist groups active from 1998 to 2012, but matches the cross-sectional sample of rebel groups featured in RLCW far better.
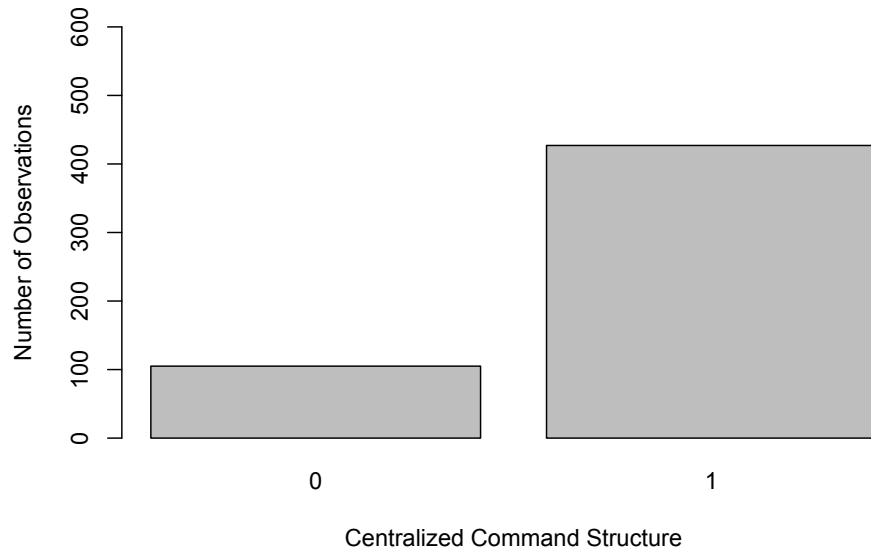
Figure 5.1: Independent Distribution of Rebel Group Centralization, 1989–2014
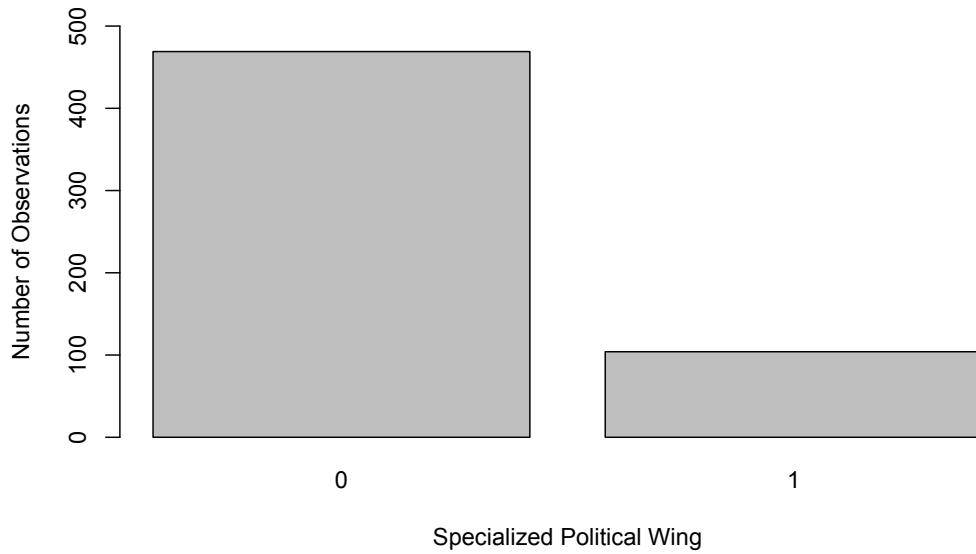


Figure 5.2: Independent Distribution of Rebel Group Specialization, 1989–2014

two different measures to investigate the effects of leadership on group size. In the first, I take

the natural log the raw count of the estimated size of the rebel group, as the NSA measure

of rebel group size has considerable right-skew. The rebel groups featured in my data range from 100 fighters to 116,000 fighters with a median size of 3,100, and a modal size of 5,000. In the second measure of rebel group size, I use the original count estimates to generate a three-part ordinal measure. The ordinal measure is coded "1" for groups which have 100 to 999 fighters in a given year, "2" for groups with 10,000 to 99,999 fighters in a given year, and "3" for those with more than 100,000 fighters.[4] In my sample, of those with non-missing values, 241 group-years are coded "1", 448 are coded "2", and 245 are coded "3". Figure 5.3 displays the distribution of this dependent variable.
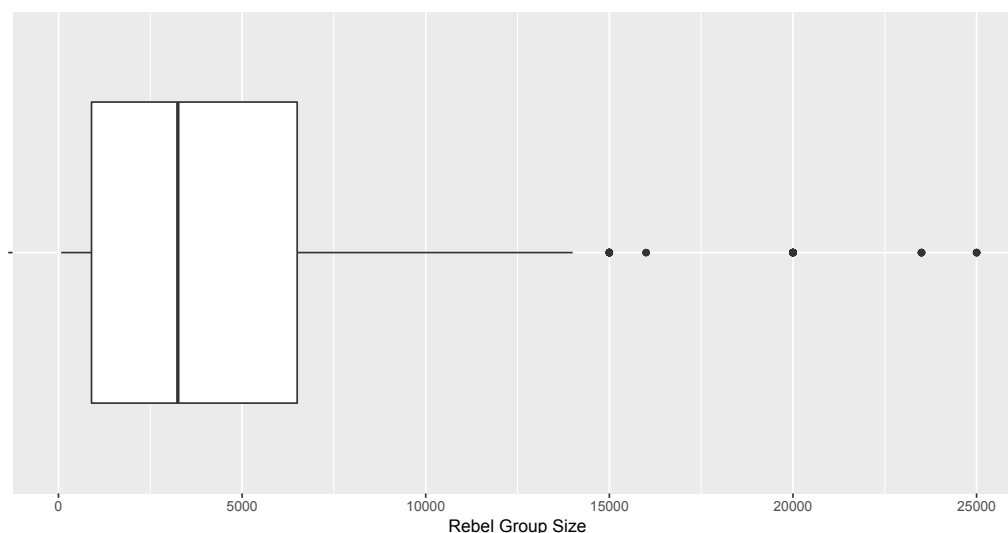


Figure 5.3: Independent Distribution of Rebel Group Size, 1989–2014

## Measurement of Rebel Leadership

As described in greater detail in Chapter 4, this project makes use of the Rebel Leaders in Civil War Dataset. In the coding process, coders first identify the individual that is most responsible for exercising power in a rebel organization, not just an operations commander or organizational figure head. To code rebel leaders, RLCW coders referenced a broad collection

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[4]This is the same coding scheme used in the BAAD Dataset.

of source materials using a set of systematic coding guidelines. Data on rebel leaders are sourced from hundreds of government reports, news publications, academic case studies, historical accounts, and conflict expert reports. Data taken from secondary sources were corroborated by rebel group publications, rebel leader interviews, and other primary sources, when available. Importantly, coding assignments were assigned to multiple coding teams, completed independently, and reconciled through tests of inter-coder reliability.
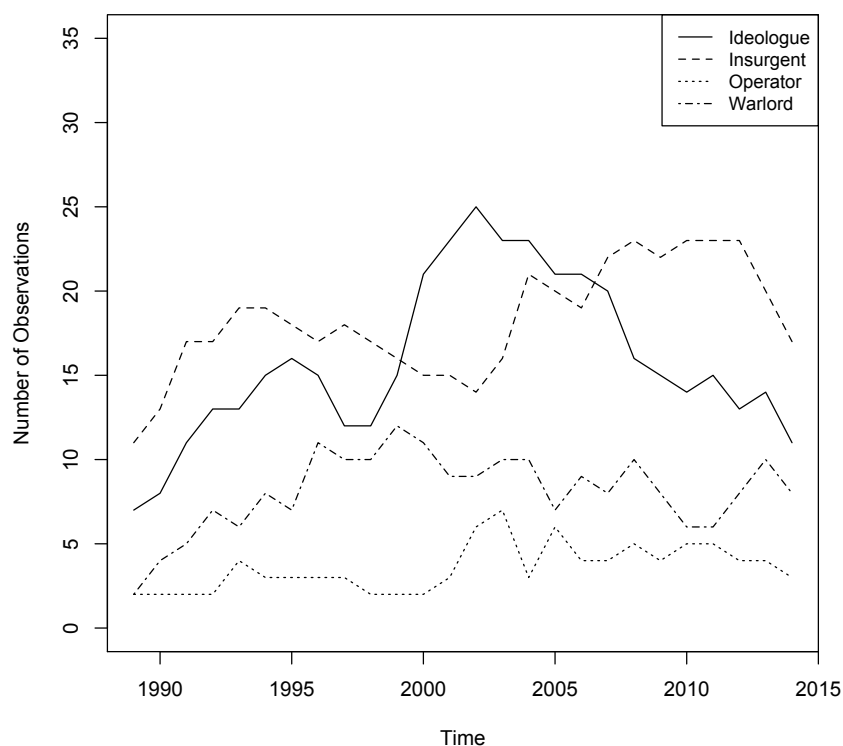


Figure 5.4: Distribution of Leader Type, 1989–2014

The RLCW dataset offers a measure for the main predictor, rebel leader type. RLCW measures variation in rebel leader type according to two factors: a leader's motivation for conflict and their prior military experience. These intersecting dimensions result in four rebel leader ideal types: the Ideologue, the Insurgent, the Operator, and the Warlord. In

the analysis, we measure variation in leader type with a multinomial indicator and use the Ideologue as a baseline category. Overall, the data feature 94 Ideologues, 68 Insurgents, 33 Operators, and 43 Warlords. Figure 5.4 shows the distribution of leader type over time.

A leader's coded prior military experience is determined by any of three, non-exclusive coding indicators: service in a formal military, extensive combat experience, and formal military training. In RLCW, leader-years are issued a "1" where coders found evidence that a rebel leader had one or more of these three forms of prior military experience. In all other cases, leader military experience is coded "0". 55 percent of rebel leaders have some form of military experience. Of the 206 leaders featured in RLCW, 105 are coded with some form of military experience. More specifically, 44 have prior military service, 130 have prior combat experience, and 95 have formal military training.
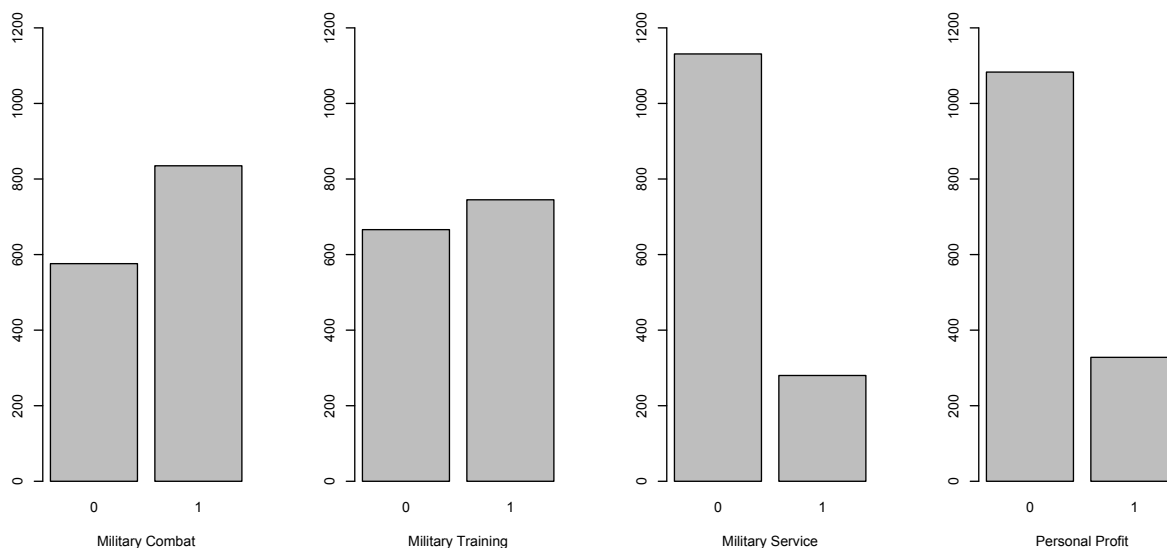


Figure 5.5: Distribution of Leader Indicators, 1989–2014

A leader's coded motive for conflict—operationalized by their demonstrated primary interest in the extraction of material resources for personal profit—is determined by leader's behaviors with respect to group resources. In RLCW, leader-years are issued a "1" where

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coders found evidence that a rebel leader profited personally from the conflict campaign. In all other cases, leader motives are coded "0". Coders re-evaluated primary and secondary sources for evidence of leader motive in each year of the campaign. For example, in 1989, Liberian rebel leader Charles Taylor, a former minister in President Samuel Doe's government, launched an insurgency at the helm of a rebel group called the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). In a pubic BBC broadcast, Taylor stated that the NPFL's primary objective was "to get that boy Doe off the backs of the Liberian people" (Ellis 1999: 75). Privately, Taylor's recruitment pitch was less ingenuous; he promised each of his early commanders—who he called his "special forces"—a large house and a $75,000 reward (Lidow 2016: 116). Moreover, from 1991 until the end of the conflict in 1997, Taylor himself became quite wealthy from revenues gathered from controlling the country's lucrative rubber and timber industries. In total, 68 of the 206 leaders are coded as being motivated by personal profit through extraction at some point during their tenure. Figure 5.5 shows the distribution of all four leadership indicators in the data sample.

## Controlling Variables

Across these models, I also control for a number of variables that existing studies indicate may confound our efforts to estimate the direct relationship between rebel leadership and differences in rebel organizational structure.

In addition to the main independent variables, I include a set of controlling variables that are likely to shape subcommanders' assessments of the costs and benefits of creating a splinter faction. At the leader level I include two controls. First, to control for the likely case of time dependency in the model, I include both a linear and squared polynomial time term which accounts for the length of a leader's *Tenure* at time $t$, as recorded in RLCW. That is, fragmentation may occur in a certain pattern, overall. This control also serves to address

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potential confounding effects in which leaders with political or military experience may be more likely to sustain longer campaigns and, thus, have more opportunities to fragment. Second, it is quite plausible that individuals who emerge into positions of leadership from the ranks of a preexisting rebel group will be selected by other group members according to certain qualities and those may also be associated with unique risks of fragmentation. That is, it is unlikely that leaders who emerge *in medias res* are randomly distributed. To address this possible source of endogeneity, I include a control for leaders who form their respective rebel groups as *Founders*, in contrast to those who receive leadership appointments from a pre-existing group during an active conflict.

At the group-year level, I control for whether or not a rebel organization is itself a *Splinter Group* as recent studies suggest that these may enjoy higher levels of cohesion (Otto 2017; Perkoski 2015; Woldemariam 2018). To measure this, I use the UCDP Conflict Actor List, which includes a dummy variable that "indicates whether a non-state actor was formed by breaking away from an actor that has also been registered in UCDP data" (UCDP 2010: 12). I also include an indicator for rebel groups that enjoy the material support of an *State Sponsor*, as existing studies suggest that these groups may have lower levels of cohesion (Tamm 2016; Lidow 2016). Third, I control for rebels which *control territory* based on information in the Non-State Actors Dataset (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2013, v3.4). Fourth, I control for *rebel group size* in models which do not test leadership effects on this factor as a dependent variable based on the Non-State Actors Dataset (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2013, v3.4). Finally, I control for groups with a *separatist agenda* with a group-level binary measure based on information in the Non-State Actors Dataset (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2013, v3.4).

At the conflict and country-year levels, I control for several factors that are likely to inform a subcommander's decision to form a new militant organization. First, as a number of existing studies on rebel fragmentation find that increased levels of combatant casualties in a conflict

dyad affect a group's probability of splitting, I issue control for *Conflict Intensity.* To code this variable, I use a group-year measure of battle-related deaths from the UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset (Pettersson and Eck 2018). Second, to account for the increased cost posed by crowded conflict spaces and higher number of potential opponents, I control for the presence of *Foreign Military Intervention* forces with a dichotomous indicator variable, as recent work indicates that these may increase the probability of splintering (Olson Lounsbery 2016). These forces include the official presence of troops from national armies, UN peacekeeping forces, and troops from the European Union, African Union, or sub-regional blocs, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Similarly, all models control for *Multiparty Conflict*, indicating conflict-years in which more than one rebel group is already active in the conflict. I expect that, as the conflict space becomes more crowded with armed parties, that the perceived cost of starting a new faction increases and, thus, decreases the probability of fragmentation, all else equal. Finally, in systems with a history of electoral institutions, subcommanders may see additional post-war benefits from leading their own movements. As such, I control for *Democracy* with a binary indicator, in which I code all countries with a Polity IV score of 7 or above as "1", and "0" otherwise (Marshall, Jaggers and Gurr 2014). Finally, I control for a country's *population size.*

A number of temporal issues are also likely to affect the effects of rebel leadership on structure and cohesion. As such, I include a cubic polynomial time trend in the models in order to control for potential temporal dependence. As shown in Figure 5.4, we observe changes in the prevalence of rebel leaders type over time. It is possible that general trends in leadership shape the observed outcomes in corresponding patterns. Moreover, because the panels are unbalanced, this approach helps me isolate the immediate effects of rebel leaders from factors that may correspond to the times at which they appear in the data.

## 5.3  Results of Statistical Analysis

### Organizational Structure

In this section, I present the results of my analysis which connects variation in rebel leader type to three dimensions of a rebel group's organizational structure. First, I leverage differences in leader type to explain which groups are more likely to adopt centralized command structures. Second, I focus on the development of a specialized political wing. Finally, I regress rebel group size on differences in rebel leadership. The results indicate that meaningful sources of variation in rebel leadership aid in understanding why different rebel groups adopt different organizational structures, holding relevant environmental conditions constant.

### Centralization

Tablle 5.2 displays the results of the regression analysis. In Model 1, I estimate the bivariate relationship between leader type and centralization. In Model 2 I add the leader and group-level controls to this regression. Models 3 and 4 include all conflict and country-level contextual controls. In Model 3, I test the independent effects of my leadership dimensions where Model 4 interacts these to leverage the full leadership typology.

With respect to the degree of a rebel group's centralization, I find mixed evidence for my proposed hypotheses. First, as shown in Model 3, I find support of Hypothesis 1: rebel groups with leaders that have prior military experience are more likely to feature a centralized command structure. In particular, leaders with a military background have a 268 percent increase in the odds of overseeing a centralized command structure than those without military experience. Second, in Model 3, I find no direct support for Hypothesis 4 in that leaders motivated by personal profit are not associated with discernible differences in degrees of centralization. However, as discussed below, leader motive comes into play when I interact the term with military experience to test the influence of variation in leader type.

With respect to differences in leader type, I find that differences in rebel leadership offer considerable leverage in explaining which groups adopt more centralized structures and which do not. As expected, I find that Insurgents, Operators, and Warlords are all more likely to feature to centralized command structures relative to the Ideologue, as expected. More specifically, I find that Insurgents have a 445 percent increase in the odds of forming a centralized group compared to Ideologues, Operators have 524 percent increase in the odds of centralization, and Warlord have a 311 percent increase in these odds.

Of course, while the Ideologue serves as a useful baseline category, I am interested in the discrete dyadic differences between all four rebel leader types. As such, I first predict the predicted probabilities in centralization for each type, holding all other variables at their means, and then estimate the discrete changes in these predicted probabilities between each type. When Ideologues are present, the probability of centralization is 0.835. For Insurgents, this probability is 0.965. For Operators and Warlords, the probability that their organizations have a centralized command structure are 0.969 and 0.954, respectively. While the Ideologue is discernible from all other leader types in degrees of centralization, none of the other types is statistically distinct from the other. I discuss the implications of this finding later in the chapter. Finally, it is important to note that these associations are not discernible in the bivariate model (Model 1). This suggests (1) that rebel leaders assess their own contextual environments when making decisions about group structure and (2) that, when it comes to the nature of a rebel group's command structure, a leader's immediate agency may be especially limited by particular situational factors. Figure 5.7 displays these predictions, based on differences in leader type, holding all predictors at their means.

The controlling variables reveal some interesting dynamics as well. First, at the leader level, I find that founding leaders are less likely to centralize their forces. Rather than evidence of differences in baseline preferences for centralization, this result may indicate that entrepreneurs struggle to construct more technical systems of command in their organizations,

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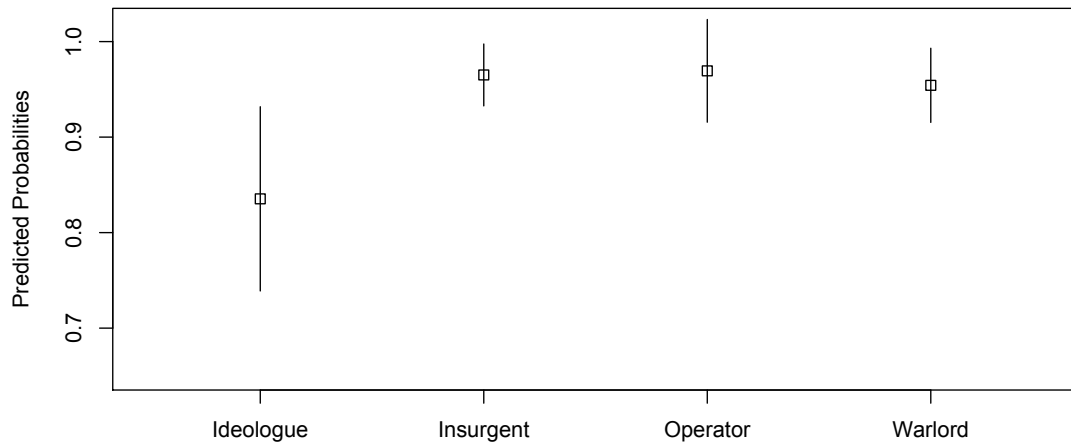
Figure 5.6: The Predicted Probability of Centralization, 1989-2014

even if they want to. This is supported by the positive estimated effect of leader tenure on centralization: the longer a leader holds power, the more likely that the group will take on a centralized command structure. Second, at the group level, I find that older rebel groups and those which hold territory or are themselves splinter factions of another active rebel group have a lower likelihood of being centralized. Again, like the estimates for leader type, the predicted probability of centralization for groups with any of these features is still well above 0.50. Finally, at the conflict and country levels, I find that rebels acting in conflicts with high levels of intensity and in contexts with high population are more likely to be centralized. There may be some endogeneity present here, where groups which are centralized are more capable of waging more conventional forms of warfare, increasing the intensity of the conflict. As some accounts (e.g. Shapiro 2013) suggest that militants decentralized in the face of sustained pressure, this issue warrants additional consideration.

**Specialization**

Table 5.3 displays the results of the logistic regression analysis. In Models 5 and 6, I estimate the bivariate association between the leadership dimensions and leader type and centralization, respectively. In Models 7 and 8, I add all conflict and country-level contextual controls. In Models 9 and 10, I add the group and leader-level controls to isolate further the independent effects of rebel leader type on the likelihood that a rebel group features a defined political wing.

With respect to the degree of a rebel group's specialization, I find support for my proposed hypotheses. First, in support of Hypothesis 2, I find that rebel groups with leaders that have prior military experience are more likely to feature a specialized operational structure. In particular, leaders with a military background have a 766 percent increase in the odds of creating a specialized political wing. Second, I find some evidence that leaders motivated by personal profit are also more likely to create separate political wings in their organizations, a 229 percent increase in these odds. (Hypothesis 5). However, this effect is only statistically discernible in the full mode (Model 9); the estimate is insignificant in the other models. Therefore, inference from this finding should be drawn with greater care.

These independent effects are manifest in the interactive terms as well. Focusing on differences in leader type, I find that variation in leadership offers considerable leverage in explaining which groups adopt more specialized political wings and which do not. As expected, based on the estimated in Model 10, I find that Insurgents, Operators, and Warlords are all more likely to create specialized units relative to the Ideologue, as expected. More specifically, I find that Insurgents have a 729 percent increase in the odds of forming a political wing compared to Ideologues, Operators have 1,325 percent increase in the odds of centralization, and Warlord have a 5,803 percent increase in these odds. The size of these coefficients are rank-ordered in the expected sequence. The Insurgent and the Operator are

not discernible from one another, though I argue that is a product of distinct mechanisms. Supportive of this interpretation is the finding that the Warlord is more likely than all other leader types to build a specialized political wing.

Again, I am interested in the discrete dyadic differences between all four rebel leader types. As such, I first predict the predicted probabilities on specialization for each type, holding all other variables at their means, and then estimate the discrete changes in these predicted probabilities between each type. When Ideologues are present, the probability of specialization is quite small, nearing zero (0.015). For Insurgents, this probability is 0.137. As expected, the Insurgent has a higher probability of building a political wing due to their experience in organizations which tend to specialize their operations. For Operators and Warlords, the probability that their organizations have a specialized structure are 0.144 and 0.314, respectively. In addition to the Ideologue being discernible from all other leader types in degrees of specialization, other leader types are discernible from one another as well. The Insurgent has a 0.177 lower probability of specialization, relative to the Warlord. While the Warlord is distinct from the other two types not motivated by private gain, it is not discernible from the Operator. In other words, three of the four leader types experience substantive differences in the degrees to which their organizations "specialize" their political operations. Finally, it is also important to note that these associations remain discernible in the bivariate model (Model 5), suggesting that the results are not driven by some feature of the controlling variables and that leaders exert considerable influence in the decision to construct a separate political wing. Figure 5.7 displays these predictions, based on differences in leader type, holding all predictors at their means.

A number of the controlling variables are found to have a statistically-discernible relationship with rebel specialization. First, with the exception of Model 7 and 8, the analysis indicates that rebel leaders with prior experience in national politics are less likely to divide their units into specialized units. This may mean that (1) political leaders have less need
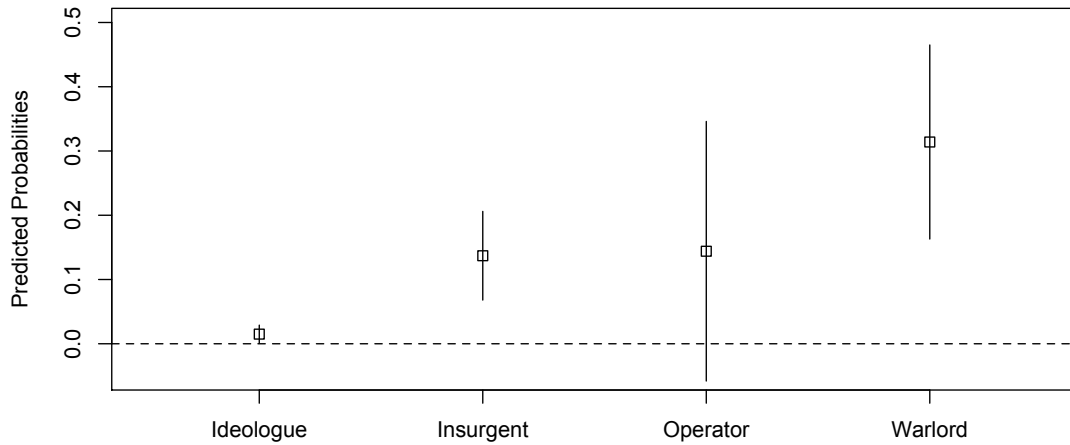
Figure 5.7: The Predicted Probability of Specialization, 1989-2014

to signal their political credibility—i.e. rebel leaders use political specialization as a signaling device—and (2) that these leaders don't have experience in the types of organizations which also specialize their tasks—i.e. political leaders do not also have military experience. Of course, this warrants additional inquiry. Second, at the group level, I find that groups which receive external support, hold territory, and are designated as terrorist organizations, are more likely to feature a specialized political wing. At face value, these findings may support a number of alternative mechanisms: rebel groups develop political wings as part of both their inward-facing efforts at territorial governance and outward-facing attempts to woo foreign support and "sanitize" the abusive behavior of their military units. Understanding the logic behind the creation of specialized wings requires a more robust understanding of the various tasks that these political wings carry out in a rebel organization. Finally, at the conflict and country levels, I find that groups acting in states with higher population levels and democratic political institutions are more likely to build specialized political wings. This would indicate that rebel leaders, as we should expect, are sensitive to their political con-

texts and build structures to match these circumstances—i.e. where popular mobilization is especially important and where civilians expect greater levels of political representation or participation.

**Size**

Finally, Table 6.5 displays the results of the logistic regression analysis with respect to rebel group size. I test the effects of rebel leadership with two different measures of the dependent variable. In Models 11 through 15, I use an ordinal measure of rebel group size and estimate this relationship with an ordinal logistic regression model. In Model 16, as a robustness check, I investigate this relationship with a logged continuous measure of rebel group size. In Models 11 and 12 I estimate the bivariate association between the leadership dimensions and leader type and size, respectively. In Models 13 and 14, I add all group and leader-level controls. In Model 15, I add the conflict and country-level controls to isolate further the independent effects of rebel leadership on force size. Model 16 repeats this analysis in an OLS model form using a logged measure of group size.

With respect to a rebel group's size, I find general support for my proposed hypotheses with one notable exception. Rebel groups with leaders that have prior military experience are only more likely to lead larger forces when the leader is also motivated by a public good (Hypothesis 3). Second, I find robust evidence that leaders motivated by personal profit are more likely to lead smaller fighting units (Hypothesis 6). These relationships are statistically discernible in both the bivariate and full model specifications. The independent effects manifest in their interactive forms as well. Moving to differences across leader type, I find that variation in rebel leadership offers marginal leverage in explaining which groups bring larger or small forces onto the battlefield. As expected, based on the estimated in Models 15 and 16, I find that Operators, and Warlords are both less likely recruit more troops relative to the Ideologue. More specifically, I find that Operators have a 48 percent

decrease in the odds of leading a larger military force. Warlords have 28 percent decreases in the odds of having larger forces. These two "profiteering" types are not discernible from one another, though the Warlord's negative coefficient is larger than the Operator's. Conversely, as expected, Insurgents are associated with a 75 percent increase in the odds of having a larger organization than the Ideologue. Consequently, groups led by the Insurgent are also expected to be larger than those with an Operator or Warlord at the helm. All in all, the results suggest that both a leader's military experience and their motive for conflict have a strong voice in shaping the number of troops in a rebel force. That said, the effect of military experience is more pronounced among leaders motivated by a public good. These results are mirrored in Model 16, which regresses a logged count of rebel size on the full set of independent variables. Based on Model 16, these effects correspond to predicted force sizes of 4,256 for Ideologues, 5,129 for Insurgents, 3,295 for Operators, and 3,011 for Warlords, all else equal. In sum, the predicted differences in group size are most distinct between leaders with different motives, though military experience caries the expected influence on group's with leaders motivated by a public good. Figure 5.8 displays these predictions, based on differences in leader type, holding all predictors at their means.

The controlling variables indicate that rebel size is shaped by a number of factors at various levels. First, the longer that leaders hold their positions of power, the larger their forces get. This is intuitive, suggesting that leaders build mobilizing momentum as they wage war. Second, at the group level, I find that those rebels with centralized command structures and state sponsors are larger. As centralized groups are better equipped to wage more convention military strategies, it makes sense that these would be associated with larger fighting corps. State sponsors provide the resources needed to staff and maintain a larger fighting force. Some endogeneity may be active here as well, where potential rebel fighters, in choosing which groups to join, select those with suitable resources. Conversely, at the group level, those organizations with a separatist agenda and which mobilize from the ranks of an
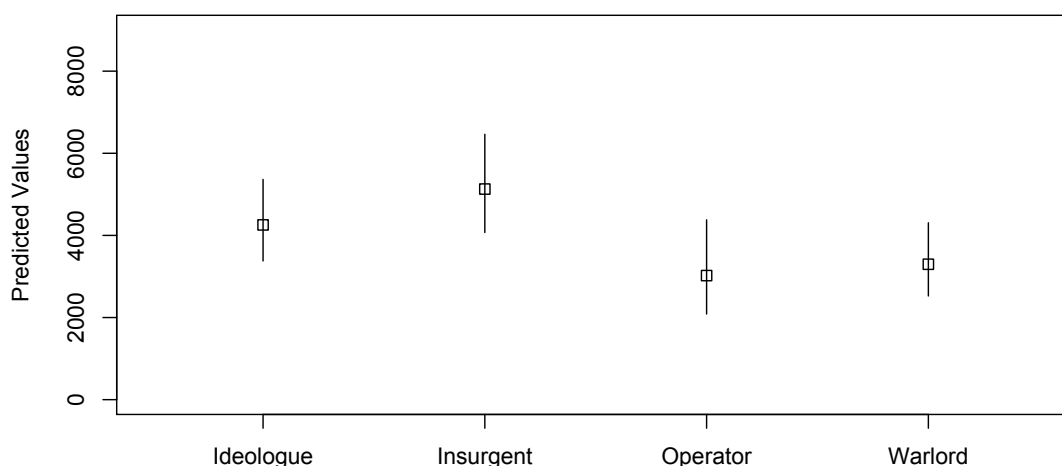
Figure 5.8: Predicted Rebel Group Size, 1989-2014

active insurgency are expected to be smaller. Finally, at the conflict and country levels, rebel groups which act alongside active foreign military intervention forces, participate in conflicts with more battle-related deaths, and among larger populations tend to recruit more fighters. [5].

## Summary of Rebel Leadership and Group Structure

In Figure 5.9, I present a summary of the main results of my analysis so far, drawing out the estimated effects of rebel leader type on group centralization, specialization, and size from the full models presented in the section above. Like the regression tables above, the coefficients in this figure should be interpreted relative to the Ideologue. Based on these estimates, I put these findings together to discuss how different leader types draw on their motives and pre-war experiences to build their organizations in unique configurations.

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[5]It should be noted that for two controlling variables, population and splinter groups, the direction of the estimates change between the ordinal logit and logged OLS specifications. Since these models are estimated
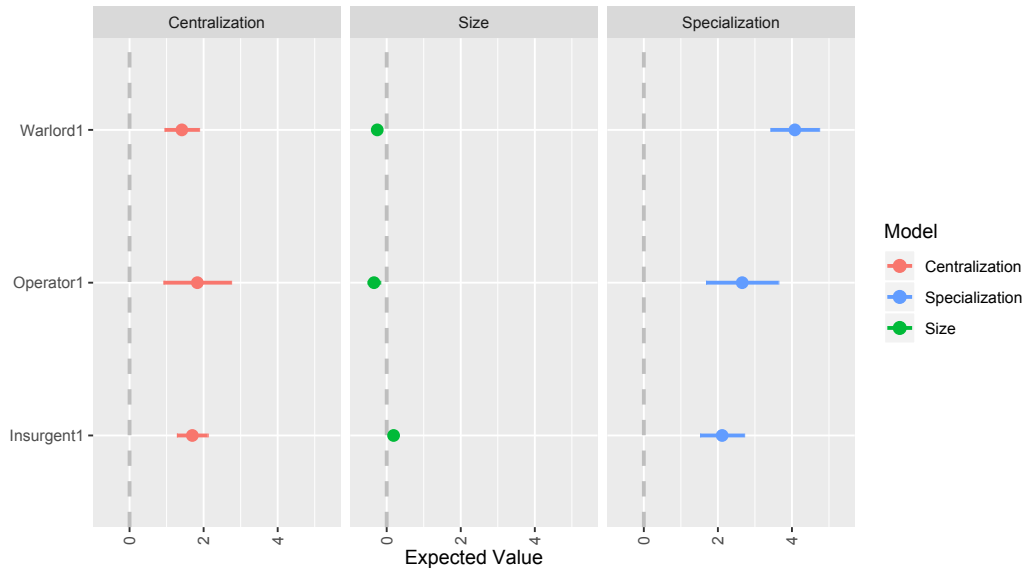
Figure 5.9: Rebel Group Structure, 1989-2014

First, viewed in combinations, these models indicate that rebel groups led by Ideologue types are more likely than all others to feature a decentralized command structure, a unified military and political unit, and a large number of active fighters. Second, the Insurgent has a high probability of building a centralized organization, a marginally-greater probability of establishing a specialized political wing, and is more likely than all types to have a considerably large force. Third, the Operator tends to go to war with a highly centralized force which tends to feature a parallel political wing, and boasts the smallest number of fighters than all other leader types, on average. Finally, the Warlord builds organizations in an especially unique configuration. Groups led by Warlords are moderately centralized, highly specialized, and moderately small. Viewed holistically, these results indicate that leadership meaningfully explains observed differences in the organizational structure of the rebel groups which emerge in conflict theaters around the world.

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from the same sample, this is especially unexpected.

## Rebel Fragmentation

A important reflection organizational management is its structural integrity, or cohesion. Leaders must structure their organizations for success, but also insulate themselves from internal elites who may seek to undermine or directly challenge their leadership. As such, in this section, I consider the empirical relationship between rebel leader type and fragmentation—are some leaders more susceptible to fragmentation than others, on average? First, I investigate this issue with a set of logistic regression models. Then, I consider a related question—whether certain leaders have a discernible rate of fragmentation—with a series of Cox proportional hazard models.

**Logistic Regression Analysis**

In Table 5.5, I display the results of the logistic regression analysis. Table 5.5 displays the estimated coefficients. These express the expected change in the log-odds of fragmentation for a unit-change in a given independent variable, all else equal. Positive coefficients, accordingly, indicate an increase in the log-odds of a fragmentation in a given leader-year. Negative coefficients indicate an estimated decrease. Models 17 displays the bivariate relationship between leader type and fragmentation. In Model 18, I add the relevant leader and group-level controls. In Model 19, I include only the relevant conflict and country-level controls. In Models 20 and 21, I put these together to consider the effects of the independent leadership dimensions and leader type, respectively, while including the full set of controlling variables. I focus on these two models to interpret the results as these provide the most complete test of my hypotheses.

I find that Ideologues are the least likely to fragment, where Operators are the most likely to split into competing factions. Organizations led by Insurgent and Operator types share similar, and more moderate, likelihoods of splitting in a given year. Specifically, Insurgents

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have a 212 percent increase in the odds of fragmentation, relative to the Ideologue. Compared to the Ideologue, Operators and Warlords have a 956 percent and 214 percent greater odds of splitting in a given year, respectively. The results support my expectations, with one important exception. My theory predicts that Ideologues would be more likely to fragment than Insurgents, due to their lack of military experience. Indeed, this expected dynamic is evident among leaders motivated by personal profit, where Operators are more likely to fragment than Warlords. Based on my theory, this surprising result would suggest either (1) that a leader's military experience may not translate to military success as consistently for leaders motivated by public goods or (2) that military effectiveness carries less sway for subcommanders in this type of rebel organization as other considerations may take precedent. This merits further inquiry.

Figure 5.8 displays these the predicted probabilities of fragmentation, based on the estimates in Model 21. To calculate these values, I consider differences in leader type, holding all predictors at their means. These offer mixed support of my expectations. Contrary to expected, Ideologues are less likely to fragment than Insurgents, suggesting that the cohesion-building effects of military experience are conditioned by a leader's motive for conflict. As expected, the Operator is most likely of all leader types to experience fragmentation, though the discrete change between the Operator and Warlord is not statistically discernible. Interestingly, the differences in the probabilities predicted for the Insurgent and Warlord, the two leader types with prior military experience, are non-discernible. It is possible that these sorts of leaders use similar approaches to cohesion-building, regardless of motive, though this needs to be investigated further. In short, all else equal, I find that groups led by Ideologues have a 0.02 probability of splitting into competing faction in a given year, those led by Insurgents have a 0.06 probability of fragmentation, Operators are predicted to have a probability of 0.11, and Warlords a 0.05 probability.

A valid concern is the issue of selection bias, in particular, that pre-existing rebel groups
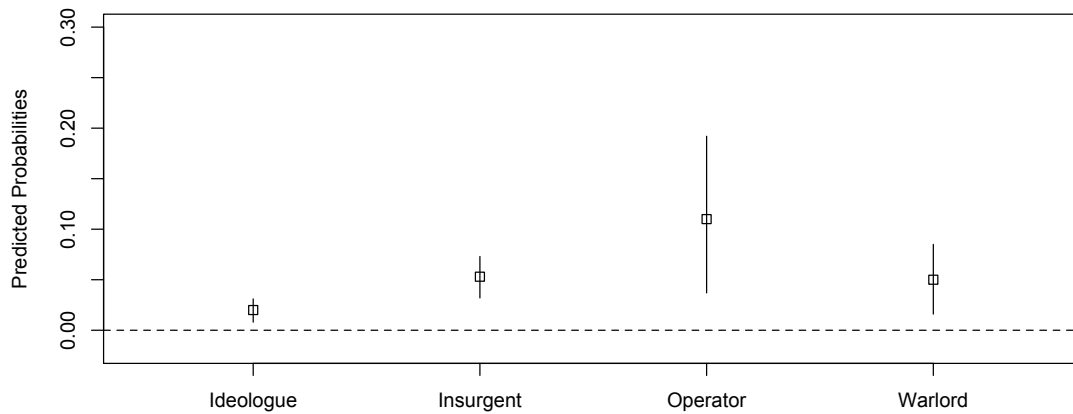
Figure 5.10: The Predicted Probability of Fragmentation, 1989-2014

which are predisposed to fragment may attract or appoint leaders who them- selves have characteristics associated with discernible levels of fragmentation. While the full models do control for founding leaders—and indicate that leaders who emerge during conflict are no less likely to experience fragmentation than those who initially mobilize rebel organizations—I conduct two robustness checks to address the important issue of leadership selection dynamics. In the first, I directly measure the nature of a leader's entry to leadership with a nine-part categorical variable. Feasibly, not just the turnover of leadership, but the process by which groups nominate or recognize new leadership may signal their latent proclivity to fragmentation in the first place. Disaggregated thus, none of the leadership entry categories is associated with a discernible likelihood of fragmentation and the results of the main independent variables remain robust to this model specification. In a second test, I subset the original sample of rebel leaders to only those responsible for the formation of their organizations. As these leaders are largely responsible for the mobilization, formation, and consolidation of these forces—as well as conflict initiation itself—their "type" is less likely to be endogenous to a conflict that they themselves are responsible for instigating. Again, the

results presented in Table 5.5 are robust to this approach. Further details and the results of both tests are presented in the appendix.

**Cox Proportional Hazards Analysis**

Closely tied to the probability of rebel fragmentation is the issue of timing—at what rate do groups fragment? While the results from the logistic regression analysis show the probability that a group fragments in a given year as a function of its leadership, they tell us little about when fragmentation occurs. That is, the logistic regression models estimate leadership effects on the cumulative incidence of fragmentation. Moreover, the logistic model picks up cases in which the same group fragments multiple times. Indeed, of the rebel groups in RLCW that experienced fragmentation, 17 percent fragment at least twice. To more clearly delineate the effects of leadership on a group's incidence rate of fragmentation, I employ a survival analysis. This approaches investigates, based on the logic outlined in the theoretical framework above, whether sub-commanders update their beliefs about the rebel leader at discernible rates, sooner or later in the conflict campaign.

Increasingly, scholars have employed survival, or duration, analysis to study the dynamics and outcomes of armed conflict. To assess the effects of rebel leader characteristics on the timing of rebel group fragmentation, I use a series of Cox Proportional Hazards models. The Cox model estimates the effect of covariates on the hazard rate, which specifies the probability that, if a rebel group "survives" to year $t$, it will experience fragmentation in the following year. This model—which does not require a specification of the baseline hazard rate—is appropriate as I have no strong reason to expect that rebel fragmentation occurs in a particular pattern.

For this analysis, the dependent variable is the length of a rebel group's "survival" before splitting into competing factions, measured as time in years. In a sample of 156 rebel organizations, 33 percent experienced fragmentation at some point. I include the same set of

independent and controlling variables as used in the logistic models as well as a fixed effect term for each country in the sample. The main coefficients of interest are expressed as hazard ratios in Table 5.6. Hazard ratios offer an intuitive interpretation, where values less than 1 indicate a relative drop in the hazard of fragmentation, all else equal. Conversely, hazard ratios greater than 1 suggest an increase in the risk of fragmentation.

The results of the survival analysis offer some fascinating dynamics and important nuance to the results of the logistic analysis. Again, these coefficient express estimated differences in the incidence rate of fragmentation, not its cumulative incidence. I find, in concert with the logistic models, that Insurgents, Operators, and Warlords have a higher risk of fragmentation—i.e. they all tend to fragment sooner in a conflict campaign. In contrast to the logstic analysis, Insurgents are the most quick of all leader types to split into competing factions, with a 5.52 greater incidence rate than the Ideologue. Operators and Warlords have nearly identical rates of fragmentation; their incidence rates increase by 3.16 and 3.28 relative to the Ideologue, respectively. This analysis suggests that Insurgents are especially vulnerable to fragmentation early in a campaign, again challenging my expectation that leaders with military experience, especially those motivated by public goods, would be more cohesive. Indeed, military experience seems to play less of a role in the timing of fragmentation, relative to its demonstrated effects on the overall probability of fragmentation. This may be due to differences in recruitment pools, where the Insurgent may especially have a tendency to recruit experienced military subcommanders from their pre-existing networks who feel equally qualified to lead an armed faction. For the Warlord, this may demonstrate the followers are more interested in payment rather than consistent battlefield success. On this issue, the Operator and Warlord will struggle equally. These mechanisms are untested in this analysis and warrants additional study.

The control variables mostly act as expected in the logistic and Cox models. Interestingly, many of the variables which the literature associates with higher probabilities of fragmenta-

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tion are only statistically discernible in the Cox proportional hazard models. For example, having an external sponsor is found to increase the incidence rate of fragmentation, but not the cumulative likelihood of this outcome. I find that groups which last longer grow more resilient to fragmentation, though this may be an artifact of the model design, as those leaders which experience fragmentation once, drop out of the sample upon the event occurring.

## 5.4   Summary and Discussion

The results presented in this chapter indicate that leaders manage their organizations in unique and identifiable patterns based on their degrees of military experience and basic motive for conflict. These are manifest in different organizational forms and degrees of cohesion. First, the Ideologue—the leader with no military experience who is motivated to provide some inclusive good—manages a relatively large and decentralized organization which streamlines its political and military operations into into common units. These leaders are the least likely to see their organizations fragment, though they may experience other lapses in cohesion and control. Based on the theoretical framework presented here, the Ideologue is most likely to instill a systems of norms which emphasize commitment, long-term horizons, and inclusivity. It makes sense, then, the the Ideologue is both the most likely to build decentralized command structure, which are most effective when non-structural forms of accountability exist, and the lowest levels of fragmentation. In so far as they control the recruitment process, these leaders should be glad to take on as many volunteer fighters as are willing to join, though they will hesitate to recruit more than their military strategies can sustain. Therefore, barring the presence of a trusted lieutenant with military acumen, the Ideologue will hesitate to mobilize beyond their own capacity to lead a massive military front. The Ideologue is a not a solider at heart; when the Ideologue recruits fighters, she is also recruiting social workers and administrators. My analysis, accordingly, suggests that they

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will almost never specialize their forces. Instead, the Ideologue incorporates their fighters directly into their overarching political campaigns.

Second, the Insurgent—the leader which is motivated by a public good and has prior military experience—oversees a rebellion marked by relatively high degrees of centralization, operational specialization, and a larger number of fighting personnel. Standing at the fore of this force, the Insurgent presents a considerable threat to the state, especially when they can retain cohesion within their ranks. Insurgents have a moderately-high probability of fragmentation, and this occurs quite quickly in the their campaigns. Given the Insurgent's prior military experience and inclination to maintain a more inclusive mobilization strategy, they rarely struggle to mobilize sufficient fighters. The Insurgent's main challenge is overcoming the challenges that come from having such a sizable fighting corps. Drawing on their past experience, in comparison to leaders with no combat or military history, the Insurgent is more likely to divide her forces into specialized units. This allows the Insurgent to maintain higher levels of control her forces and focus her own efforts on the military campaign while delegating political operations to a trusted lieutenant.Instead, as they focus on military means to achieve political ends, the Insurgent is most vulnerable to fragmentation following (1) sustained military losses, (2) disagreements regarding the group's political priorities and objectives, or (3) when the Insurgent fails to acquire sufficient resources needed to sustain a viable military campaign. In short, episodes of fragmentation in Insurgent-led groups are rarely opportunistic; they are the result of more practical concerns. While the Insurgent-led rebellion is hardly invulnerable, the Insurgent is often a capable leader whose leadership is likely to emphasize and seek to balance both the military and political aspects essential to a successful rebellion.

Third, the Operator—the leader type motived by personal profit and with no prior military experience—tends to mobilize a relatively small and centralized organization. It occasionally features a specialized political unit. For the Operator, insurgency is about generating

political and physical instability in order to capitalize off of the chaos. Due to their motives, as expected, the Operator oversees an especially exclusive approach to recruitment and makes an effort to construct a robust system of oversight and accountability. Agency loss is likely to result in a loss of profit. However, this arrangement is only so effective. The Operator is, of all four leader types, the most likely to see entrepreneurial lieutenants break off to create profitable factions of their own. Viewing these results holistically, the Operator is most likely to suffer lapses in both control and cohesion—and, thus, wield a relatively weak military front—when they are unable to acquire access to sufficient revenue resources. That is, more so than other rebel organizations, the viability of those led by Operators are strongly dependent on their ability to secure profitable streams of revenue. Under these conditions, the Operator can wage a lethal and credible challenge to the incumbent state. The Operator is most vulnerable to counter-insurgent forces when its means of profiteering are localized to a limited geographic space, forcing the Operator to hold a defend territory. Given their tendency to recruit a smaller number of fighters, this can be especially difficult— and unprofitable. Is is worth reiterating that the Operator is the least common leader type featured in RLCW. More work is needed to evaluate the pathways by which this rebel leader type emerges in the conflict environment. In the meantime, my analysis, indicates that the Operator has the capacity to wield a deadly, though lean war campaign.

Finally, the Warlord—the rebel leader with military experience who is motivated by personal profit—operates an organization which is somewhat centralized, highly specialized, and even smaller than the Operator's. The Warlord constructs an organization geared towards the recruitment and training of a disciplined corps of skilled fighters. Surprisingly, in comparison to Insurgents and Operators, the Warlord is not associated with a discernibly higher probability of centralization. This may be due, however, to the ubiquity of centralization across all rebel groups in my sample. As expected, the Warlord is also the most likely, by a long-shot, to construct a specialized political wing. This offers the Warlord two benefits

corresponding with the other operational priorities: (1) it gives her organization a structural buffer between the outside world and the behavior of its more predatory fighting force and (2) it allows the Warlord to maintain an even higher degree of accountability and monitoring of her subordinates. When individuals are placed in specialized units, they are given more task-specific assignments. This allows the Warlord to quickly assess whether her followers are following through with their orders. Ultimately, the Warlord is about securing profits for themselves and their coterie of ranking lieutenants. The Warlord is susceptible to some fragmentation, but their military experience seems to better equip them to secure the profits they need to maintain cohesion.

The results from this analysis raise some additional questions for further inquiry. First, what other leadership characteristics and experiences are consequential to the decisions they make on and off the battlefield? Are former politicians more effective rebel leaders? Do they mobilize more followers? Are young rebel leaders less capable on the battlefield? Do they suffer lower levels of confidence in their leadership and, thus, greater rates of fragmentation? Can we connect rebel leaders to the outcomes of war? Do some achieve complete military victory more often than others? Correspondingly, as work by Prorok (2016) may indicate, certain rebel leaders get to the negotiation table faster than others? These results provide sufficient evidence in my baseline argument—i.e. rebel leaders matter—and it is worth investigating which other leader-level factors matter beyond those investigated here.

Second, the studies have controlled for group and structural level factors that are likely to influence the decisions that leaders make with respect to organizational management. An interesting follow up to this study would consider the relative explanatory power of these variable categories; under which conditions are leader-level explanations especially powerful and when are they more limited? Relatedly, I have empirically bracketed this study to the study of leadership during war, assuming that the pre-war environment does not act as a priming agent for the emergence of one leader type over another. This important assumption

merits more direct testing. These characters do not emerge from nothing; do certain factors push or pull certain individuals from the main stage at conflict onset?

Third, a growing literature suggests that leadership decapitation is likely to open a rebel organization to the risk of fragmentation (Price 2019; Jordan 2009; Bakke, Cunningham and Seymour 2012; Tiernay 2015; Johnston 2012). Most studies on leadership decapitation focus on its relationship to group elimination. There are a range of organizational outcomes between "collapse" and "survive". For example, fragmentation. Moreover, this literature has already found that differences in organizational structure explain why some groups are more resilient to high-value targeting strategies than others—a factor which this dissertation has found to be directly connected to certain leader types. Given the evidence found in this study, the effect of leadership decapitation on organizational fragmentation may be directly related to the extent to which leaders make themselves essential to group operations—and whether protocols for leadership replacement have been put in place. For instance, a group organized around a "cult of personality" is unlikely to maintain structural integrity in the case of leadership decapitation. Rebel leaders motivated by private goods are motivated to make themselves indispensable to both day-to-day operations and group viability. In order to retain control of their fighters—and secure the greatest profits from combat—opportunistic leaders will be wary of installing ready means of leadership replacement. Accordingly, I expect that such organizations will rarely fragment in the case of leadership decapitation; rather, they will implode entirely. Group fighters may remain in the conflict, going on to join other profiteering operations, but organizational continuity is unlikely. Conversely, upon the loss of a public goods motivated leader, rebel organizations should experience less of a threat to their structural integrity. At times, however, it will be enough of a shock to motivate organization sub-commanders to form splinter organizations. In particular, in cases where group sub-commanders believe that selected leadership replacements will undermine the original objectives or strength of the organization, they are likely to form their own

groups to continue the "good fight". It is counter-intuitive, but the more moderate threat posed to "activist" groups by leadership decapitation is more likely to incite fragmentation than then overwhelming organizational challenges posed to "opportunistic" groups in the same circumstance.

Finally, the event of fragmentation is observed and recorded in the data used for this analysis. I have focused on why some groups fragment and why some do not. Not considered here are failed attempts at fragmentation. Often masked by the fog of war, these are grouped in my observational data with non-attempts as "0s". An important extension of this study would aim to understand why some attempts at fragmentation fail, i.e. which factors or practices produce failed attempts at fragmentation and which conditions lead to successful ones. It would also separate failed attempt from no attempts. For the time being, this study offers robust evidence that leaders shape the degrees of structural cohesion in their organizations. In the next chapter, I investigate the mechanisms proposed in previous theory chapter and tested indirectly in this chapter with a case study of Jonas Savimbi and his leadership of the UNITA insurgency in the Angolan Civil War (1975–2002).

Table 5.2: Leadership and Rebel Centralization, 1992 – 2012

|  | Binary Logistic Regression | | | |
|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Insurgent1 | 0.472* | 1.504*** |  | 1.695*** |
|  | (0.254) | (0.374) |  | (0.416) |
| Operator1 | 1.092 | 2.138** |  | 1.831** |
|  | (0.761) | (0.868) |  | (0.912) |
| Warlord1 | −0.121 | 1.795*** |  | 1.413*** |
|  | (0.307) | (0.449) |  | (0.466) |
| Military1 |  |  | 1.303*** |  |
|  |  |  | (0.359) |  |
| PrivateGoods1 |  |  | −0.175 |  |
|  |  |  | (0.427) |  |
| Founder |  | −3.068*** | −3.360*** | −3.597*** |
|  |  | (0.500) | (0.549) | (0.572) |
| Tenure |  | 0.160*** | 0.205*** | 0.211*** |
|  |  | (0.047) | (0.051) | (0.053) |
| Territory_BAAD2 |  | −2.029*** | −1.400*** | −1.666*** |
|  |  | (0.388) | (0.380) | (0.411) |
| logSize |  | 0.267* | 0.174 | 0.155 |
|  |  | (0.145) | (0.146) | (0.155) |
| GroupSurvival |  | −0.266*** | −0.308*** | −0.316*** |
|  |  | (0.049) | (0.054) | (0.055) |
| SplinterGroup1 |  | −2.733*** | −3.101*** | −3.240*** |
|  |  | (0.492) | (0.515) | (0.532) |
| StateSponsor1 |  | −0.722** | −0.516 | −0.464 |
|  |  | (0.321) | (0.337) | (0.343) |
| Separatist1 |  | 1.706*** | 1.349*** | 1.440*** |
|  |  | (0.330) | (0.346) | (0.358) |
| Intervention1 |  |  | −0.779* | −0.798* |
|  |  |  | (0.407) | (0.414) |
| logIntensity |  |  | 0.083 | 0.073 |
|  |  |  | (0.056) | (0.056) |
| logPop |  |  | 0.240** | 0.222** |
|  |  |  | (0.109) | (0.110) |
| log(Duration) |  |  | −0.244 | −0.069 |
|  |  |  | (0.337) | (0.331) |
| Observations | 532 | 529 | 529 | 529 |
| Log Likelihood | −255.356 | −193.897 | −192.337 | −188.079 |
| AIC | 522.712 | 415.794 | 418.673 | 412.158 |

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered by country shown in parentheses.Quadratic and linear trends included at the year level to account for temporal dependency.

Table 5.3: Leadership and Rebel Specialization

| | Binary Logistic Regression | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) |
| Military1 | 1.278*** | | 1.835*** | | 2.159*** | |
| | (0.292) | | (0.363) | | (0.503) | |
| PrivateGoods1 | 0.297 | | 0.580* | | 1.192** | |
| | (0.252) | | (0.308) | | (0.488) | |
| Insurgent1 | | 1.396*** | | 1.931*** | | 2.115*** |
| | | (0.325) | | (0.393) | | (0.594) |
| Operator1 | | 1.013 | | 1.713* | | 2.657*** |
| | | (0.695) | | (0.890) | | (0.975) |
| Warlord1 | | 1.657*** | | 2.647*** | | 4.078*** |
| | | (0.354) | | (0.464) | | (0.656) |
| Founder | | | 0.893*** | 0.917*** | 0.469 | 0.630 |
| | | | (0.294) | (0.295) | (0.420) | (0.438) |
| StateSponsor | | | | | 3.511*** | 3.747*** |
| | | | | | (0.488) | (0.520) |
| RebTerCont | | | | | 1.390*** | 1.494*** |
| | | | | | (0.519) | (0.536) |
| logSize | | | | | −0.014 | 0.094 |
| | | | | | (0.185) | (0.211) |
| GroupCentral | | | | | −2.959*** | −3.315*** |
| | | | | | (0.737) | (0.808) |
| Separatist1 | | | | | −0.341 | −0.173 |
| | | | | | (0.411) | (0.436) |
| Terror | | | | | 0.993 | 1.303* |
| | | | | | (0.647) | (0.669) |
| Combatants | | | −0.0001 | −0.0001 | −0.0001 | −0.0002 |
| | | | (0.0001) | (0.0001) | (0.0001) | (0.0001) |
| Intervention | | | 0.470 | 0.416 | −0.385 | −0.489 |
| | | | (0.402) | (0.400) | (0.590) | (0.608) |
| logPop | | | 0.338*** | 0.363*** | 0.427*** | 0.458*** |
| | | | (0.108) | (0.111) | (0.134) | (0.148) |
| Democracy1 | | | 1.149*** | 1.204*** | 1.236* | 1.374** |
| | | | (0.349) | (0.353) | (0.638) | (0.677) |
| Observations | 573 | 573 | 545 | 545 | 541 | 541 |
| Log Likelihood | −257.330 | −256.202 | −216.654 | −214.506 | −151.196 | −145.100 |
| AIC | 520.660 | 520.404 | 455.308 | 453.013 | 336.392 | 326.200 |

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered by country shown in parentheses. Quadratic and linear time terms included at the year level to account for temporal dependency.

Table 5.4: Leadership and Rebel Group Size, 1989–2014

| | Ordinal Logistic Regression | | | | | Logged OLS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (11) | (12) | (13) | (14) | (15) | (16) |
| Military1 | −0.524*** (0.196) | | −0.127 (0.162) | | | |
| PrivateGoods1 | −1.028*** (0.270) | | −1.217*** (0.188) | | | |
| Insurgent1 | | −0.285 (0.213) | | 0.326** (0.166) | 0.552*** (0.139) | 0.186** (0.095) |
| Operator1 | | −0.368 (0.386) | | −0.450*** (0.118) | −0.254*** (0.054) | −0.343** (0.169) |
| Warlord1 | | −1.783*** (0.346) | | −1.654*** (0.190) | −0.387** (0.162) | −0.255** (0.114) |
| Founder | | | −0.254 (0.168) | −0.453*** (0.171) | 0.189 (0.126) | 0.017 (0.094) |
| Tenure | | | 0.192*** (0.017) | 0.199*** (0.017) | 0.077*** (0.016) | 0.056*** (0.009) |
| SplinterGroup1 | | | 0.279 (0.198) | 0.131 (0.201) | 0.212 (0.141) | −0.235** (0.111) |
| StateSponsor1 | | | 1.368*** (0.169) | 1.362*** (0.169) | 1.270*** (0.152) | 0.253*** (0.079) |
| GroupCentral_NSA | | | 3.608*** (0.102) | 3.935*** (0.105) | 2.743*** (0.044) | 1.236*** (0.166) |
| Separatist1 | | | −0.974*** (0.161) | −1.016*** (0.159) | −1.264*** (0.135) | −0.385*** (0.084) |
| Intervention1 | | | | | 0.082 (0.160) | 0.835*** (0.090) |
| Population | | | | | −0.028 (0.060) | −0.000*** (0.000) |
| Combatants | | | | | 0.0002*** (0.0001) | 0.0001*** (0.00002) |
| log(Duration) | | | | | −0.433*** (0.104) | −0.038 (0.069) |
| Observations | 934 | 934 | 934 | 934 | 934 | 959 |
| $R^2$ | — | — | — | — | — | 0.641 |
| AIC | 1287.190 | 1284.689 | 1125.848 | 1115.264 | 1072.341 | — |

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors shown in parentheses. Fixed effects included at the country level. Annual temporal term included to account for temporal dependency.

Table 5.5: Leadership and Rebel Fragmentation, 1989–2014

| | Rebel Fragmentation | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (17) | (18) | (19) | (20) | (21) |
| Insurgent | 0.885** | 0.941* | 0.850* | | 1.136** |
| | (0.432) | (0.493) | (0.477) | | (0.530) |
| Operator | 2.001*** | 2.257*** | 1.983*** | | 2.357*** |
| | (0.506) | (0.572) | (0.521) | | (0.598) |
| Warlord | 0.938* | 1.381** | 1.093** | | 1.445** |
| | (0.502) | (0.593) | (0.527) | | (0.611) |
| Military1 | | | | 0.214 | |
| | | | | (0.361) | |
| PrivateGoods1 | | | | 0.860** | |
| | | | | (0.414) | |
| Founder | | 0.880* | | 0.978** | 0.867* |
| | | (0.478) | | (0.465) | (0.482) |
| logSize | | 0.166 | | 0.127 | 0.198 |
| | | (0.152) | | (0.145) | (0.157) |
| GroupSurvival | | 0.035 | | 0.027 | 0.030 |
| | | (0.055) | | (0.055) | (0.056) |
| SplinterGroup1 | | −0.111 | | 0.104 | −0.131 |
| | | (0.490) | | (0.478) | (0.500) |
| StateSponsor1 | | 0.183 | | 0.382 | 0.437 |
| | | (0.413) | | (0.435) | (0.461) |
| logOSV | | 0.071 | | 0.097 | 0.076 |
| | | (0.064) | | (0.066) | (0.067) |
| Intervention1 | | | −0.148 | −0.171 | −0.566 |
| | | | (0.437) | (0.466) | (0.499) |
| MultiParty1 | | | −0.121 | 0.034 | −0.051 |
| | | | (0.710) | (0.710) | (0.752) |
| Combatants | | | 0.00005 | 0.00002 | 0.00001 |
| | | | (0.0001) | (0.0001) | (0.0001) |
| Democracy1 | | | 0.476 | 0.484 | 0.357 |
| | | | (0.512) | (0.538) | (0.545) |
| Observations | 1,411 | 1,298 | 1,411 | 1,298 | 1,298 |
| Log Likelihood | −231.058 | −212.459 | −226.530 | −217.521 | −211.520 |
| Akaike Inf. Crit. | 552.117 | 534.919 | 565.060 | 551.043 | 541.040 |

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Robust standard errors clustered by country shown in parentheses.

Table 5.6: Cox Proportional Hazards Models, 1989 – 2014

| | Rebel Fragmentation | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (22) | (23) | (24) | (25) | (26) |
| Insurgent1 | 0.733*** | 1.643*** | 1.017*** | | 1.709*** |
| | (0.142) | (0.199) | (0.188) | | (0.218) |
| Operator1 | 1.088*** | 1.023*** | 1.045*** | | 1.151*** |
| | (0.234) | (0.283) | (0.273) | | (0.297) |
| Warlord1 | 0.306 | 1.155*** | 0.260 | | 1.188*** |
| | (0.193) | (0.281) | (0.251) | | (0.293) |
| Military1 | | | | 1.243*** | |
| | | | | (0.177) | |
| PrivateGoods1 | | | | −0.162 | |
| | | | | (0.212) | |
| Founder1 | | 0.081 | | 0.354* | 0.199 |
| | | (0.224) | | (0.210) | (0.220) |
| SplinterGroup1 | | −0.400* | | −0.327 | −0.323 |
| | | (0.242) | | (0.230) | (0.232) |
| log(GroupSize) | | −0.126* | | −0.085 | −0.013 |
| | | (0.068) | | (0.066) | (0.069) |
| GroupSurvival | | −1.283*** | | −1.282*** | −1.295*** |
| | | (0.082) | | (0.083) | (0.083) |
| StateSponsor1 | | 0.509** | | 0.724*** | 0.928*** |
| | | (0.199) | | (0.208) | (0.223) |
| logOSV | | 0.015 | | 0.016 | −0.003 |
| | | (0.035) | | (0.035) | (0.036) |
| Intervention | | | −0.448** | −0.174 | −0.531** |
| | | | (0.218) | (0.246) | (0.256) |
| MultiParty | | | 0.282 | 0.211 | 0.140 |
| | | | (0.397) | (0.340) | (0.355) |
| Combatants | | | 0.00004 | −0.00002 | −0.00005 |
| | | | (0.00004) | (0.0001) | (0.0001) |
| Democracy1 | | | 1.577*** | 1.745*** | 1.818*** |
| | | | (0.334) | (0.330) | (0.338) |
| Observations | 1,156 | 1,039 | 1,156 | 1,039 | 1,039 |
| R$^2$ | 0.032 | 0.667 | 0.408 | 0.673 | 0.678 |
| Max. Possible R$^2$ | 0.961 | 0.969 | 0.961 | 0.969 | 0.969 |
| Log Likelihood | −1,862.012 | −1,224.854 | −1,578.111 | −1,215.996 | −1,208.111 |

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

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# Chapter 6

# Jonas Savimbi and the UNITA Insurgency, 1975–2002

> "The victory is a constant state of spirit"
>
> — Jonas Savimbi

The Angolan Civil War—which enveloped the first 27 years of post-colonial Angola—was a violent contest between competing sentiments of national identity divided along deeply entrenched social cleavages. The Angolan civil conflict came quickly on the heels of the Angolan armed struggle for independence from the Portuguese colonial government, a devastating war that lasted from 1961 to 1974. Upon the rapid exit of the Portuguese colonial government, the three rebel movements that spearheaded the struggle for independence—the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA)—turned on each other to claim control over the country they had won.[1]

Quickly caught up in the geopolitical fray of the Cold War, the Angolan Civil War was

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[1] This trajectory is actually quite similar to the Afghan Intra-Mujahideen War (1989–1996), in which the armed groups that fought to win independence from the Soviet occupying forces (1979-1989) competed for control of the power vacuum they had helped to create.

intensified by the considerable intervention of several countries. With the assistance of Cuban troops and Soviet support, the MPLA rebels won a series of critical battles in the first few months of the war, during which time they ousted the (FNLA) from the capital city of Luanda and claimed status as the official Angolan government. By February 1976, the MPLA was recognized as the government of Angola by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) as well as the United Nations, Portugal, and more than eighty other nations. Following the Cuban-led MPLA campaign in northern Angola, the FNLA quickly disintegrated. The United States and South Africa—fearing the rise of Communism and a potential invasion of South Africa by Cuba from Namibia—backed the UNITA forces.[2] With this support, Savimbi's organization continued its campaign against the MPLA. When these sources of support later waned—and facing a stronger MPLA army—the UNITA forces changed strategy to wage a guerrilla campaign from the rural spaces of central and southern Angola. Though international interest in the conflict declined with the end of the Cold War, UNITA continued its insurgency against the MPLA government until the leader of the rebel forces, Jonas Savimbi, was killed in 2002.

In the 27 year-long war, millions of Angolans were killed, severely injured, or displaced. Murkied by the fog of war and the politicization of casualty counts, estimates of the total fatalities inflicted by the armed groups vary. Lacina (2006) estimates that as many as 1.5 million Angolans—of which only 160,476 were battle-related—were killed in the conflict from 1975 to 2002.[3] The conflict featured various forms of military engagement, from guerrilla-style ambushes to aerial bombardment attacks to more conventional battles between pitched armed forces, including a series of massive battles near Kuito Kuanavale in 1987 and 1988.

The focus of this chapter is Jonas Savimbi and his organization, *Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola* (UNITA). Savimbi initially mobilized UNITA as a predom-

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[2]Zairean leader Mobutu Sese Soku supported the FNLA/UNITA coalition early in the conflict for similar reasons; he feared an increase of Soviet control in the region.

[3]Ziemke (2008) offers a more modest, but equally horrific estimate of civilian casualties based on archival research of government and newspaper reports. She reports that 56,359 civilians were killed from 1961 to 2002.

inately political, nationalist movement in line with much of the pan-African independence leaders of the day. So, while the leadership of the MPLA and FNLA were living and managing their organizations from abroad—in Brazzaville and Zaire, respectively—Savimbi immediately based UNITA operations in the provinces of Angola in hopes of sparking a grassroots movement. From the beginning, UNITA found a home in the Central Highlands among the Ovimbundu, the largest ethnic group in Angola.

As such, in this chapter, I follow the precedent set by Pearce (2012, 2015), and Ziemke (2012), in focusing on the group-level and societal factors that shaped the Angolan conflict. In particular, I highlight the import role that Jonas Savimbi's previous experiences and motives played in shaping his management of the UNITA campaign. In short, the purposes of this chapter are to provide qualitative depth to the statistical relationships identified in the previous chapter and to investigate this case directly for the theoretical mechanisms that are presented in Chapter 3. Savimbi, who I identify as an Insurgent-type, oversaw a campaign that varied in centralization, specialization, and size. This is inevitable in a conflict as protracted as the Angolan Civil War. As such, this case is limited in its ability to match the broad and probabilistic theory describing. That said, this case offers important insight. Where the statistical analysis can only connect different leader types to aggregated measures of these structural dimensions, as an extension of my argument, I suspect that leaders are likely to react to common pressures in different ways based on their type. With this in mind, I describe why Savimbi's control over the centralization and size of his forces, and decision to create specialized political and military wings, reflects his military background and motives for conflict.

In the pages that follow, I first provide some domestic, regional, and global context to the Angolan Civil War. Then, I outline the trajectory of the UNITA campaign, dividing it into three discernible temporal stages. Next, I provide a detailed profile of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi, in which I emphasize his prior military experience and motives for conflict based.

I then investigate Savimbi's norms of leadership, paying close attention to the role that his military experience and motives played in shaping the organizational structure(s) of UNITA and its cohesion.

## 6.1   The War Before the War: The Angolan Fight for Independence

The Angolan War for Independence was driven by three armed resistance organizations: the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).[4] The movement for independence was highly fragmented. Indeed, during many stages of the war against Portugal, these forces more likely to attack one another than to coordinate military efforts against colonial troops. Indeed, the Portuguese would play these factions off of one another, using intelligence given by one group to locate and attack another (James 2011: 49). Each group came to represent an alternative vision of Angolan nationalism, roughly aligned along existing social cleavages in the state. Many of the dynamics and tensions featured in the Angolan War for Independence (1961–1974) can be observed in the civil war that followed,

The Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola (MPLA) was formed in December 1956 by Agostinho Neto as an offshoot of the already-active Angolan Communist Party. Neto, who eventually became the country's first president, was the son of a minister who studied medicine in Portugal. He return to Angola in 1959 and joining the MPLA. Like many leftist

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[4]Though not the immediate focus of the present analysis, the War for Independence and its participants have been described at length in a number of studies, including: Fernando Joao da Costa Cabral Andresen Guimaraes, 1992, "The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: International Politics and Domestic Political Conflict 1961-1976," PhD dissertation thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science; Ryszard Kapuscinski, 1987, *Another Day of Life*, San Diego, CA: Harcourt.

movements at the time, the MPLA organization was led by a vanguard of more urban, educated elites. Specifically, the MPLA leadership was staffed by *mesticos*, persons of mixed white Portuguese and black Angolan heritage, *assimilados*, and intellectuals.[5] Neto, who was elected president in December 1962, was forced to relocate the MPLA's headquarters to Congo-Brazzaville. As a result of leading in absentia, the MPLA leadership suffered considerable laps in cohesion and operational expediency from its forces in Angola. During the War for Independence, the MPLA received support from Cuba starting in 1966. The Soviet Union supported the MPLA from the time of its emergence in the mid-1950s.

Formed in 1962, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) was led by Holden Roberto and headquartered in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa).[6] Roberto maintained a close partnership with Zairean leader Mobuto Sese Seko, who was his brother-in-law. The FNLA was largely led and staffed by members of the Bakongo ethnic group, who live in the northeast provinces of the country. While the FNLA received the most external military support of the three movements during the war for independence, it was a highly disorganized force, managed by low-quality and often corrupt subcommanders. Because of the FNLA's close relationship with Zaire and its staunchly anti-Communist stance, however, the United States initially saw the group as the most agreeable agent to protect their interests in Angola. Jonas Savimbi joined Holden Roberto and the FNLA in 1962, assuming the role of foreign secretary. Soon after, Savimbi and Roberto formed the Angolan Revolutionary Government in Exile (GRAE), with Holden as president and Savimbi as foreign minister. The group received support from neighboring countries and a 1963 endorsement from the Organization for African Unity (OAU). It was also a favorite of distant states interested in countering

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[5] *Assimilado* is a term given to black Angolans, especially those living in Luanda, who climbed the colonial socio-economic ladder by adopting the Portuguese language, social customs, and culture. This title carried with it, technically, a legal bestowment of Portuguese citizenship, though practices to this regard varied widely.

[6] The FNLA was an extension of the Uniao das Populacoes do Norte de Angola (UPNA), which was formed in 1957 and rechristened the Uniao das Populacoes de Angola (UPA) in 1958 (James 2011:42).

the growing influence of Cuba and Russia in the MPLA. Support—at least $50 million, four hundred and fifty tons of arms, and training— came to GRAE/FNLA from both the United States and China (James 2011), both of whom were using the FNLA to limit Soviet influence in the region (Gleijeses 2002). War does make strange bedfellows.

UNITA, the focus of this chapter, was not active as an armed organization until 1966. In the early 1960s, Savimbi spent some months traveling throughout Asia, including China, North Korea, and Vietnam, and Eastern Europe to woo potential supporters for the FNLA and, supposedly, the future UNITA. He also met with a number of regional state or revolutionary leaders, including SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma, Ghanian revolutionary Kwame N'Krumah, ZANU commander Josiah Tongogara, and Kenyan nationalist Jomo "Burning Spear" Kenyatta. Indeed, Tongogara and his forces joined the Chinese Eleven at Nanking in 1966 for training (Bridgland 1986: 67). Perhaps most importantly, Savimbi formed a partnership with the new authorities in Zambia, which offered an outside base from which to stage UNITA's entry into Angola.

In October 1964, from an OAU meeting in Cairo, Jonas Savimbi announced the formation the *Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola* (UNITA) independence movement with Antonio de Costa Fernandes. Savimbi and Fernandes, who were students in Switzerland together, were actively involved in the Angolan nationalist network. In justifying the formation of UNITA, Savimbi cited his frustration with the nepotism and despotism of GRAE's leadership, poor operational planning, and a revolutionary strategy that offered "no correct line for the People's Armed Struggle." Savimbi especially condemned GRAE's leadership-in-exile approach and made plans to launch an anti-colonial movement from within Angola (Bridgland 1986). Savimbi was frustrated with the OAU which recommended to all Angolan resistance leaders position their headquarters in neighboring countries; it was counter-productive to the mass mobilization and empowerment of Angolans. As Savimbi stated, "The leadership has to go inside and live with the people, even if it means risking

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death. More people would rally around the cause if they saw their leaders suffering alongside them" (Bridgland 1986: 61).

The process by which UNITA first mobilized falls outside the temporal scope of my empirical analysis. However, a summary of UNITA's origins brings to light some important dynamics that the group carried into the Angolan Civil War, including its initial military structure and base of mobilization. At the beginning, Savimbi recruited from a motley combination of the Angolan population, including educated Angolan nationalists, exiled or displaced Angolans living in neighboring Zambia, Ovimbundu living in central Angola, and the Chokwe in the northeast. While much of the initial UNITA leadership was non-Ovimbundu—and this was done intentionally towards cultivating a broader grassroots nationalist organization—most UNITA fighters came from the Ovimbundu communities in Bié and Moxico. This is critical; UNITA was a black Angolan nationalist group led by black Angolans. Savimbi recounts telling revolutionary leader Ché Guevara during a meeting in 1964, "If outsiders like you bring all their formulas of revolution and try to impose them on us then you are coming with the same kind of superiority complex as the colonists in Africa" (Savimbi 1980).

In September 1965, Savimbi chose eleven of this early recruits to join him in China for training in the execution of guerrilla warfare. While an admirer of Ché Guevara and other leftist military leaders, Savimbi—a dedicated student of peasant rebellion and guerrilla warfare—was convinced that the Maoist model was the most appropriate fit fo the circumstances and conditions that defined the Angolan geographical landscape and political climate. The UNITA Eleven (aka the "Black Chinese") as they were called consisted of David Chingunii, Samuel Chiwale, Mateus Banda, Tiago Sachilombo, Jeremias Kussiya, Nicholau Chiyuka, Jacob Inacio, Isaias Massumba, Jose Kalundungo, Paulino Moises, and Samuel "Mwanangola" Chivala. Of these, only five remained with UNITA through the great battle at Cuito Cuanavale in 1988-89. Three defected before the start of the Angolan Civil War in 1975.

The first set of UNITA fighters entered Angola on the 15th of March 1966.[7] The Chinese Eleven, who completed their training in early 1966, joined the UNITA fighters in Angola in October of that year. They conducted their first attack on December 6, 1966, entering into a war that they would not exit for nearly 40 years.

On April 25, 1974, a democratically-minded joint military-civilian force overthrew the fascist *Estado Novo* dictator Antonio de Oliveira Salazar in a nearly-bloodless coup. Among other issues, the coup was motivated by a frustration with the cost that the simultaneous resistance movements in Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Angola were placing on the country's already-suffering economy and the political elite. As such, the new military government made the turnover of its colonies a rather immediate order of business following its ascension to power.[8] In Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, independence was a more straight-forward transition, as the resistance movements in each country were spearheaded by only one organization. Conversely, the Portuguese exit strategy in Angola was complicated by the presence of three active, armed groups that were only sporadically cooperative with one another. This set an ominous stage for the transition of power to a new Angolan government.

The Alvor Agreement, signed on January 15, 1975, acknowledged the independence of Angola and, formally, established parameters for a transitional government to be shared by the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA leadership.[9] Under the agreement, a Portuguese high commissioner would govern the country until November 11, at which point, the country would gain complete independence. The transfer of governance was to be marked by a multi-party presidential election. The accord also mandated the formation of a new Angolan army,

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[7]There is some discrepancy as to whether Savimbi was with this unit at the time of its incursion or if he joined later (Guimaraes et al. 1992).

[8]Though the war between Portugal and Angola ended in a ceasefire and the withdrawal of colonial troops, this victory should not be interpreted as the result of a military defeat of the colonial troops. Indeed, there is little evidence that the Portuguese forces were strategically compromised. In the first ten years of the war for independence, it is unlikely that the resistance forces, combined, inflicted more than 1,000 casualties on the colonial army, which reached a peak of roughly 70,000 troops (Bridgland 1987: 90).

[9]FLEC and David Chipenda's MPLA faction, Revolta do Leste (RDL), were not invited to participate in the negotiations.

the Angolan Defense Forces, which would comprise 24,000 Portuguese and 8,000 troops from the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA rank-and-file. In practice, however, there was no developed process of formal decolonization in Angola; only a chaotic withdrawal of both state and colonial society that created havoc as well as a power vacuum.[10] In many ways, the hasty withdrawal was prompted by the pre-emptive military staging of the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA.

Lacking motivated oversight, the 1974 Alvor Agreement failed, as the three independence movements turned on each other in an intra-revolutionary war. Indeed, the elections prescribed by the Alvor Agreement never happened. The MPLA took the initiative, bolstered by a sudden influx of Cuban and Soviet support, to claim control of Luanda and announced the formation of an independent Angolan government on November 11, 1975. The MPLA became the de facto government to be challenged by all comers.[11] The FNLA and UNITA forces prepared to resist.

## 6.2   The UNITA Campaign

The UNITA's organizational objectives are outlined in its manifesto published during the war for independence. It was first a foremost meant to be an inclusive movement rooted in black African nationalism. Apocryphally, Savimbi warned against ideological in-fighting. "This struggle is not ideological because it cannot exclude anybody. It has to unite us all....This struggle has to incorporate everyone from the sincere chief who dislikes the odious Portuguese colonial system up to the most enlightened revolutionary....from the isolated peasant in the

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[10]British journalist Fred Bridgland reports that Jonas Savimbi, prior to the onset of the struggle for independence, once asked political activist and MPLA founder Agostinho Neto why he was not fighting directly for independence and Neto replied that it could not happen without change in Portugal (1987: 38). Neto's prophecy would prove to be quite true.

[11]While the MPLA started as a disciplined Marxist organization, as Ziemke puts it, "Over time, the ideals of Marxism, nationalization, and socialism by MPLA elites receded and the rawest form of capitalism [was] embraced for the way in which it could line their pockets" (74).

valley and the mountains who only gets from his work poverty to the contract labourer who does not even know the warmth of home" (Savimbi 1965). This was easier said than done. As discussed earlier, for centuries the colonial government systematically treated black Angolans in distinct patterns according to their ethnic identity and geographical proximity to the colonial capital of Luanda. Those peoples from the north and, to a lesser extent, coastal provinces had access to greater privileges. These were educated by the Portuguese. Conversely, those from the central, eastern, and southern parts of the country—the "bush"—enjoyed none of these benefits, albeit trivial by scale, and suffered the bulk of the colonizer's abuse.

During a meeting in Switzerland, MPLA leader Agostinho Neto told Savimbi that "It was impossible that a militant as bright and brave as he could have emerged from the south [meaning the bush]: surely his family originally came from the north?" (Bridgland 1986: 41). Neto, born in the Angolan province of Bengo, was Kimbundu. Neto's sentiments reflects a core principle of UNITA's recruitment strategy and political agenda. Initially, Savimbi made efforts to create a multi-ethnic, nationalist organization. A UNITA manifesto reads: "UNITA undertakes to protect minority rights, be they racial, religious, or ethnic. The peculiar social situation of Angola calls for harmonious co-existence for all ethnic groups and races that are components of the Angolan nation" (Dohning 1984: 61). In practice, the bulk of UNITA support was rooted in the entrenched marginalization of the Ovimbundu by the Portuguese, *assimilados*, Kimbundu, and *mesticos*. Savimbi intentionally crafted this narrative, framing the conflict as a continued struggle against the new imperial Cuban and Soviet forces and power asymmetries residual from the colonial era.

Many Angolans will tell you that there were "two wars", the first taking place from 1975 through 1992—the year of a presidential election—and the second from 1993 until the conflict's end in 2002. The 1992 presidential election serves a critical pivot point in the conflict. It greatly affected the cohesion, military strategy, and material resources of UNITA.

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Moreover, it represented a defined shift in the treatment of local civilians by the armed groups, especially UNITA forces. As such, I describe the UNITA insurgency based on these two stages, highlighting the events which marked major success and losses for the UNITA forces. This summary is meant to serve as a framework for the following analysis of Savimbi's leadership and UNITA's organizational structure and cohesion.

## 1975–1992

Part of the January 1975 Alvor Accords, the first round of democratic elections were scheduled for October of that year. Early victory of MPLA. Political focus of UNITA. The Portuguese were quick to leave, tired of the economic and political costs that the Angolan colony had posed to their state, and spent little effort to ensure a smooth transition of power. Meanwhile, the broader international community warned of a likely return the violence. Sure enough, in a number of skirmishes, the militants jockeyed for position, prepared to take control of the state by force. By July 1975, the MPLA, led by a large corps of Cuban fighters, delivered a series of fatal blows to the nearby FNLA, which had stationed the bulk of their force in the northern part of the country. The FNLA, which many initially believed to be the strongest military power in the country, was summarily defeated by 1976.

In the regional capital of Huambo, in November 1975, Savimbi announced the formation of an alternative independent state of Angola. The joint MPLA-Cuban forces, strengthened by the recent arrival of Soviet tanks, moved quickly to eliminate these final challengers to their control of the state. Following the retreat of South African forces earlier in the year, UNITA was left vulnerable in its headquarters in Huambo to the Cuban-FAPLA offensive which moved from Luanda to the Central Highlands. With under 4,000 fighters, UNITA was no match for the incoming government troops. So began the "Long March". In an interview, a former vice-president of UNITA informed me that French and South African officials who

were also fleeing Huambo due to the approaching army, offered to transport Savimbi from the city and out of Angola. He refused, saying, "Not even Napoleon could get me" (L2).

After being pushed from Huambo, UNITA changed its strategic focus to pushing Cuban troops out of Angola and forcing Neto's MPLA forces to the negotiation table. This effort was slowed by intermittent foreign support for UNITA and the rather consistent backing of the MPLA by Cuba and the USSR. Washington Post journalist Richard Harwood reported in 1981 a conversation with Savimbi: "What I can say is that from 1977 to 1979-80 we received a total of about $10 million from several sources outside. From the end of 1979 and through 1980 and 1981 we did not receive any really substantial money, but we have been managing." The amount of support for UNITA was likely far more than the total provided by Savimbi to Harwood. U.S. covert aid to UNITA, alone, is estimated at about $250 million between 1986 and 1991 (HRW 1996).

With the help of the United States, UNITA established the organization's headquarters in Jamba in 1979. Having a central and permanent base, UNITA began to mobilize and train a semi-conventional military campaign in 1979. This included multiple frontal assaults on MPLA forces and bases over the following years as UNITA gained considerable strength. The conflict escalated to full-on conventional war, compounded by the presence of nearly 50,000 fighters from Cuba, the USSR, East Germany, North Korea, Namibia, South Africa, and North Vietnam (James 2011).[12]

From 1986 to 1988, a series of massive and highly consequential battles were waged in the southeastern province of Kuando Kubango. Savimbi openly stated that this exchange "would be a matter of life and death for UNITA". Some of the MPLA offensive was led by Fidel Castro via telephone. Other parts were assisted by Soviet commanders on the ground. In the face of this incoming offensive, UNITA made the decision to hold Jamba, rather than

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[12]Chester Crocker, the U.S. Undersecretary of State for African Affairs, said in an interview on the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, "Basically, if you wanted to see how many Cubans there are [in Angola], you started counting baseball diamonds from satellites..." (BBC ).

to flee. This set the stage for a deadly military exchange inflated by high levels of military assistance from the United States, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and South Africa. In the first Battle of Lomba, UNITA and the MPLA both lost considerable numbers, the battle ending in a stalemate. Both forces were demoralized, but increased flows of military support from their backers

In a military offensive meant to capture the UNITA capital of Jamba, the MPLA moved on the town of Mavinga in 1987. Following this modestly successful attack, the MPLA directed a total of 29,000 troops to the bank of the Lomba River. This battle is often called Lomba II to make it distinct from the 1986 battle along the same river. Lomba II has been called the "greatest military battle in the history of Africa south of the Sahara".[13] Here, FAPLA was definitely defeated by the joint UNITA-South Africa force. Ground troops retreated to the city of Cuito Cuanavale. Emboldened by this victory, UNITA followed these forces north to capture to city. Despite claims to the contrary, following several attempts, UNITA gave up this effort. The battles at Lomba, Mavinga, Cuito Cuanavale established that the MPLA lacked the military power needed to defeat UNITA . This effectively guaranteed UNITA a seat at the negotiation table, but also encouraged the MPLAs backers to cooperate with international efforts at peaceful settlement. As such, long-supportive foreign backers from each side began to step away. In December 1988, delegates from Angola, Cuba, and South Africa met in New York to negotiate and sign the Tripartite Accords (as known as the New York Accords). This agreement granted independence to Namibia from South Africa and effectively concluded the active presence of foreign troops in the Angolan Civil War. The MPLA and UNITA were, more or less, on their own.

The same day at the signing of the agreement in New York, the United Nations Security Council mobilized the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM). UNAVEM

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[13]For a fascinating and relatively frank account of this military offensive, see Shubin et al., *Cuito Cuanavale: Frontline Accounts by Soviet Soldiers*, Jacana: 2015.

peacekeepers came to Angola in January 1989. Following a number of skirmishes, Savimbi and MPLA leader José Eduardo dos Santos met in Gbadolite, Congo in June 1989 to discuss the terms of a ceasefire. They agreed to a temporary peace, but this broke down a few months later, as both sides accused to other of continuing to conduct military operations in the country. Over the next year, Savimbi dealt with internal challenges and the conflict maintained only a simmering intensity as UNITA and the MPLA assessed their strategic positions in light of the withdrawal of the the foreign actors who had long-sustained the war.

The Bicesse Accords, signed in Portugal in May 1991, were meant to end the conflict with a mutual disarmament of both the combined 150,000 MPLA and UNITA fighters and the subsequent creation of a joint military force, to be called the Armed Forces of Angola (FAA). FAA was intended to be an army 50,000 strong. By all accounts, this was a "false demobilization". According to a former UNITA general, UNITA only contributed about 10% of its required force size—and these troops were not siphoned from the rebel group's main forces (L7)[14] The Economist even asked, "Is Mr Savimbi using the opportunity to clear out some dead wood and keep his best officers in the field?" The accords also contained a so-called "Triple Zero" clause, which prohibited either side from purchasing new supplies of weaponry. Under the accords, the MPLA remained the legitimate and internationally-recognized government, retaining responsibility for running the state during the interim period and for setting the date for elections. By the signing of the agreement, the Angolan Civil War had already killed between 100,000 and 350,000 persons (HRW 1993). The presidential and legislative elections were set for September 1992.

Overall, the agreement at Bicesse was "a tall order on a very tight timetable, allowing only 16 months between the signing of the Accords and elections" (Fortna 2003). The U.N. Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM I) team of 576 people was responsible for monitoring

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[14]Other estimates are more generous. Fortna (2003) finds that 65 percent of MPLA' s troops had demobilized, but only 26 percent of UNITA's had.

during this interim period. In a report for Human Rights Watch, Alex Vines points out that the agreement was made possible partly by the ending of the Cold War, which facilitated U.S.-Soviet cooperation, and partly by the desire of the Soviet Union and Cuba to reduce their financial commitment to Angola. During this time, Savimbi, perhaps as a contingency plan, used the time between the signing of the agreement in Bicesse and the election to move troops into strategically-located municipalities, such as Kuito, Melanje, and Huambo.

Angola's first nationwide elections were held on the last two days of September 1992. They provided the first opportunity for Angolans to express their will in what the U.N. and other foreign observers concluded was a "generally free and fair" process (Vines 1996). With a turnout of more than 91 per cent (4.4 million) of registered voters, MPLA leader Jose Eduardo dos Santos won 49.6% in the popular vote, while UNITA leader Savimbi gained 40.7%. In the legislative elections, the MPLA won 54% and UNITA 34% of the vote (Vines 1996). Savimbi was offered the position of vice president, which he reportedly accepted, initially. However, when the MPLA indicated that it would add an additional vice-president to the government from its own party list, Savimbi refused the proposal and began developing plans to return to war (L13). Technically, under Angolan law, failure of the winner in the presidential election to receive more than 50 per cent of the votes cast required an election runoff. However, a runoff was not held. Instead UNITA rejected the results wholesale and returned the country to civil war by remobilizing its forces across the country.

Many former UNITA commanders and fighters believe that Bicesse is where UNITA lost the war. At this point, Savimbi believed that elections would provide the pathway to victory, rather than a continued military campaign. Moreover, he was strongly encouraged by the United States to participate in the demobilization (L2, P1). Some commanders believed that UNITA should maintain their military momentum and take the capital (L7, L4, L10). Others, including Savimbi, however, were convinced of the organization's ability to win a popular vote—indeed, UNITA had been mobilized for this exact purpose from the

beginning. UNITA lost the election in 1992. The organization had fought for the ability to participate in viable multiparty elections, an objective Savimbi regularly cited at party rallies and organizational meeting. Savimbi responded to UNITA's defeat by crying foul, refusing to accept the outcome. He prepared to return to war.

## 1993–2002

The result of a series of detrimental events set in motion by the 1992 elections, UNITA was "in a state of decomposition" when Savimbi died in 2002 (Beck 2012). UNITA experienced sustained military difficulties starting in the mid-1990s. Following the 1992 election results Savimbi lost most of his international legitimacy and support. The end of the Cold War era and the demise of apartheid in South Africa had already weakened UNITA's external financial and military support networks. New UN sanctions on UNITA's diamond trade further depleted Savimbi's primary source of revenue and forced the group to abandon its efforts to remobilize a conventional military capabilities.

Linda Heywood notes that the decade between 1992 and 2002 represented "the most sustained period of military and state violence in Angola." In response to UNITA attacks against civilians and MPLA-held cities, the MPLA inflicted high levels of indiscriminate violence against UNITA supporters and civilians from the Ovimbundu ethnic group. MPLA supporters living in the UNITA-controlled area—notably the south-east and central highlands—fled to the coast in fear of a bloody response from UNITA followers (Heywood 2011). At this time, both UNITA and MPLA forces planted landmines in contested rural regions, causing additional civilian casualties. In short, this stage of the conflict featured systematic systematic violations of the laws of war by both the government and the UNITA rebels. On the part of UNITA, indiscriminate shelling of starving, besieged cities by UNITA resulted in massive destruction, and the loss of untold numbers of civilian lives (HRW 1999). On the part of

the MPLA, indiscriminate bombing by the government also took a high civilian toll, as did landmines, starvation and disease. It is estimated that 300,000 Angolans—3 percent of the country's population—died as a result of fighting between October 1992 and late 1994. This estimated casualty count is thought to be greater than that of the preceding sixteen years of the conflict. The United Nations reported that between May and October 1993 as many as 1,000 people were dying every day in Angola (HRW 1994).

In 1993, the United Nations Security Council passed seven resolutions relating to the conflict in Angola. Expressing its "deep concern" for the abuse of local populations, UNITA's refusal to accept the results of the elections, and UNITA's non-compliance with the disarmament and demobilization procedures specified in the peace accords, the UN Security Council imposed a number of sanctions against UNITA and its leadership. Following a series of losses against the MPLA, in November 1994, UNITA representatives met with government officials to sign the Lusaka Protocol, which was meant to reaffirm many of the terms in the Bicesse Accords. These items included a cease-fire and program for demobilization and disarmament, and the deployment of a more substantial peacekeeping mission from the United Nations christened UNAVEM II. Following the signing of the Lusaka Protocol, official foreign support for UNITA was absent almost entirely.

Alex Vines, in a special report for Human Rights Watch, writes that UNITA "used the Lusaka peace to shield itself from further territorial losses and rebuild its military" (4). While fighting between the armed forces decreased during this time, Savimbi restocked the group's military supplies and prepared his forces for a renewed campaign. Using profits from increased mining efforts in the north-eastern region of Lunda Norte, Savimbi prepared UNITA for a strategic shift from guerrilla to conventional warfare. Despite an UN embargo in arms sales to Angola, multiple sources report that arms were flown into the country from private contractors in Bulgaria and Albania as well as from regional states, namely, Zambia, South Africa, Togo, Burkina Faso, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Not adequately trained in the use of their new weapons or the execution of the broader accompanying strategy. Lack of logistics to support conventional war. UNITA was "forced into a semi-conventional defensive war....[the organization] was at a disadvantage against better armed government forces backed by air support and with more experience in conventional operations. The reason for UNITA's shift to a war of positions was the burden of defending diamond captured mines at Cafunfo, Luzamba and Kapenda. For UNITA, diamonds modified the style and orientation of the war' in costly and unsustainable ways" (Seymour 2000: 57). With the recent MPLA capture of diamond production sites, a decrease in the global price of diamonds, and the passing of sanctions that deprived of UNITA of their normal export routes, UNTiA's diamond exports slowed to $200 million in 1998. This, in many ways, was the straw that broke the camel's back, cutting off the last means of revenue by which savimbi could wage war against an increasingly powerful counterinsurgent force. Conversely, the MPLA only got more wealthy. Oil prices rose in mid-1998, enabling the MPLA government to build up its military capability and achieve an additional strong of victories through 1999.

From 1993 to 1997, UNITA's level of territory control in Angola from from 70 percent to 35 percent. In 1994 alone, UNITA territorial control dropped from 60 percent to 40 percent. This is, in part, a result of the organization being ill-equipped for its new strategy of taking and holding onto urban centers. UNITA had long perfected its rural-based method of insurgency. This change in strategy, detrimentally, coincided with losses in international support and drops in revenue from the group's diamond operations in the north-east.

It comes to little surprise, then, that 1998 marked a decided change in the employment of violence by the armed parties, the balance of power between combatants, and the level of cohesion in UNITA. Information on the parties responsible for the violence against civilians, as gathered by Jen Ziemke, is shown in Table 6.1. Ziemke (2008) points out,

Many quantitative assessments, scholarly articles, United Nations reports, humanitarian accounts, newspaper reports, and firsthand witnesses to the war explicitly mention that something about the conflict changed from 1998 to 2002 (Sites and Learning 2002; Brinkman 1999). For example, Sites and Learning suggest that as the fighting grew in intensity during 1998, so too did the deliberate, brutal, and direct targeting of civilians (2002). Even in light of the massive humanitarian tragedies that unfolded during 1993-1995, nothing prepared these observers for the seemingly deliberate change in strategy from conventional warfare to terrorizing civilians.

Table 6.1: Attacks Against Civilians in the Angolan Civil War

| Years | MPLA | UNITA | South Africa | Other |
|-------|------|-------|--------------|-------|
| 1975 – 1980 | N/A | N/A | 79% | N/A |
| 1981 – 1985 | 0% | 38% | 62% | 0% |
| 1986 – 1990 | 5% | 90% | 5% | 0% |
| 1991 – 1995 | 26% | 56 % | N/A | 16% |
| 1996 – 2000 | 18% | 61% | N/A | 21% |
| 2001 – 2002 | 32% | 63% | N/A | 5% |

Data from Ziemke (2008). Table replicated from Thaler (2012: 559).

By August 1999, Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos announced that he would no longer negotiate with Savimbi and instead aim for a clear military victory. Soon after, UNITA's headquarters in the towns of Andulo and Bailundo were captured by MPLA forces, reducing . FAA also captured the municipality of Bailundo, the political base for UNITA. The city of Jamba taken in December 1999.

The death of Savimbi. The final stand [quotes from Numa, Tchiyaka, and Savimbi].

## 6.3 The Rebel Leader: Jonas Savimbi

### Background

In 1934, Jonas Malheiro Savimbi was born in Munhango, Bié, a town in the central highlands of Angola.[15] Though Ovimbundu, Savimbi had unique opportunities for his social station. His father was among the evangelical leadership found along the Benguela Railroad, which cuts from the coastal town of Lobito through the regional capital of Huambo and across the central highlands into the Democratic Republic of Congo and, finally, into Zambia. Loth Savimbi, Jonas's father, applied for *assimilado* status when Jonas was a child. As a result, Savimbi was able to attend school in Silva Porto, Sa da Bandeiro, eventually, in Lisbon. He excelled in his studies, but struggled—an Ovimbundu coming from a rural background—to assimilate fully into the social circle of urban mestico and assimilado students which studied in the schools managed by the Portuguese.[16]

Savimbi's tumultuous relationship with the Portuguese authorities traveled with him to Portugal. After the United Church sent him to Lisbon in 1958 to study medicine, the political police (PIDE) pressed him to inform on other Angolan students. He refused and, at the outset of 1961, shortly before anti-colonial insurgency broke out in Angola, fled to Switzerland where he pursued a license in political and legal sciences at the University of Lausanne" (Marcum 1983).[17] While in Switzerland, Savimbi made more open and concentrated efforts to connect with the already-active network of Angolan revolutionaries. In 1961, Savimbi travelled, by

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[15]For a more in-depth profile of Savimbi's childhood and background, see the biography written by British journalist Fred Bridgland entitled, "Jonas Savimbi: The Key to Africa."

[16]One former member of UNITA speculates that this likely had a profound effect on Savimbi, who both "despised those Angolans of mixed race" and loved their way of life." As Savimbi came to lead a movement built around the rural peasantry of Angola, the frame he adopted for the organization took a marked stance against black Angolans who adopted colonial customs and benefitted from the colonial government.

[17]While he did not finish his medical studies and only acquired a license in political and legal studies, Savimbi insisted on being referred to as Dr. Savimbi. This was quite strategic. Multiple sources confirmed that Savimbi kept his diploma framed in his office at UNITA headquarters in Jamba. This is worth noting because Savimbi's initial authority and legitimacy came, in part, from his being perceived as highly educated (L1).

way of Kenya, to Leopoldville to join Holden Roberto and the UPA in their fight against the Portuguese colonial government.

Of course, a focus on these two dimensions of Savimbi's background—military experience and motives—cannot paint a complete picture of the individual. Leveraging these dimensions, however should offer useful insight into the management of UNITA and its long struggle for independence and, later, control. In the following section, I describe how Savimbi's military experience and motive for conflict translated to the processes of management of particular interest in this study.

## Motive for Conflict

I code Savimbi as having a public goods, or provisional, motive for conflict. While monikered the "Gucci Guerrilla" by Western audiences and accused of extorting Angola's diamond resources, I find no evidence that Savimbi profited personally from leading the UNITA insurgency. None of my interviewees—even those with defectors and MPLA leaders—suggest that Savimbi took any funds for himself or profited materially from the war.[18] Moreover, I find no other third-party evidence that Savimbi acquired significant monetary wealth during the war. Beyond the issue of leader motive, this provides important nuance to the literature which often assumes a sort of path dependency between the availability of "lootable" natural resources and predatory or opportunistic behavior.

That Savimbi was not motivated by monetary advancement is further manifest in other decisions he made throughout the two wars in Angola. For example, one of Savimbi's stated rationale's for leaving Holden's FNLA/GRAE was the systematic lack of discipline and prof-

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[18]There is a report that French oil company Elf made payments both the MPLA and UNITA side as a way to secure booty future in the case of a victory by either side. As well as paying President dos Santos, Elf paid UNITA in 1991. Specifically, the company is reported to have placed US$2 million in a Swiss bank account, with the code name Salad, on behalf of rebel leader Jonas Savimbi. When prompting UNITA leaders for thoughts on this, I found that none believed that Savimbi made use of these funds for personal gain. Full report here: Paul Webster, "Elf Spent $60m a Year on Bribes, Investigators Told," *Guardian*, July 12, 2000.

iteering behavior of its commanders (). In addition, UNITA never paid any of its leader of fighters. Savimbi didn't even receive a base salary during the war. In contrast, groups led by opportunists come to rely on incentive structures built around monetary selection incentives (Weinstein 2007; Lidow 2016). From an interview with Savimbi conducted by Richard Hardwood in 1981: "UNITA had no payroll—no one from the lowliest soldier to Savimbi himself was paid. The uniforms were donated by Morocco and the weapons came from three sources—a few items left over from the CIA largesse of 1,975,550 tons of material shipped in by China in 1978 and many, many weapons (40 percent of the total) captured from the MPLA." Third, my interviews suggest that Savimbi saw essential to the success of the movement his own sharing the financial burden faced by the rank-and-file and well as his higher level lieutenants. Savimbi was careful to make clear to his followers, especially his ranking commanders, that he too was suffering for the sake of the struggle.

So what motivated Savimbi, who has been called a "monster" and "meglomaniac" by both nemeses and former disciples? Political power in the form of national leadership was undeniably a powerful source of motivation for Savimbi. Congruently, UNITA was driven towards one purpose: the creation of a government which gave equal representation and power to the disadvantaged and marginalized peoples of Angola. In Savimbi's mind, such a government could only be led by UNITA. From a strategic standpoint, this meant achieving complete political and military victory over the MPLA government.

## Military Experience

I code Savimbi as having military experience prior to the onset of the Angolan Civil War based on (1) his prior combat experience in the Angolan War for Independence and (2) his rigorous, multi-month training at the Nanking Military Academy under the direction

of Mao Tse-Tung.[19] First, during the fight against Portugal, Savimbi "spent most of his time leading his troops on the field" (Gleijeses 2002: 239). During this war, UNITA was much more a small, guerrilla force than a conventional army. Savimbi played a critical role in the management and execution of the group's initial military efforts. For example, his strategic manipulation on the Benguela Railway reads like an excerpt of T.E. Lawrence's campaign in Saudi Arabia. The Benguela Railway runs the length of the 13th parallel from the port of Lobito through Huambo and the Angolan border town of Luau, where it connects with the Katangan Railway in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Trained in Maoist guerrilla tactics, Savimbi leveraged the economic and military importance of the railway to undermine MPLA offensives into southern Angola. While accompanying a UNITA attack on the Benguela Railway, Washington Post journalist Leon Dash reports that Savimbi bragged about the precision of these attacks, "The Portuguese soldiers use two train engines [on Benguela Railway], so the trains can stop completely and go in reverse if they hear gunfire from the armored car. But in the four minutes between the armored car passing and the train arriving we can cut the line so the armored car cannot back up to harass us." UNITA only attacked troop cars, not freight trains—probably an effort to minimize soured relations with Zambian leader, whose economy relied heavily on the functioning of the railway. UNITA would also blow up railways using culverts under the tracks, taking a week to fix. UNITA had refrained from hitting the railway since 1967 because of the negative way the Zambian government had reacted.[20] Indeed, Savimbi was expelled from Zambia that year. By 1973, however, military considerations overtook political concerns. "The railroad must be destroyed," Savimbi told Dash, "I see no other way."[21]. According to Savimbi, as early as 1969, he was receiving pressure from his own lieutenants to reduce his battlefield

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[19]Savimbi had no prior service in a state or colonial military, the third indicator for military experience considered in the RLCW data program.

[20]Savimbi promised to "do everything in his power to see that the UNITA forces do not disrupt the Benguela [Railway]." "Message from Angola", *Kwacha Angola*, November 1986: 6.

[21]Interview with Dash

responsibilities (Bridgland 1987: 85). After that point, Savimbi's presence on the frontline was reduced, though not eliminated. Savimbi agreed to travel with a bodyguard of 400 fighters, 100 of which were trained to remain behind to fight in the event of an attack and 300 of which would lead Savimbi to a place of safety.

Savimbi was trained in military strategy and tactics, especially Maoist-style guerrilla warfare, at the Nanking Military Academy (Martin 2018). Savimbi underwent an extensive training program even before joining the Chinese Eleven in 1965. According to Samuel Chiwale—one of the UNITA commanders to participate—the Chinese instructors focused on the design and execution of guerrilla tactics, the use of various arms and explosives, introduction to the Maoist ideological and political model of revolution, the development of military and political intelligence operations, and instruction on how to train new recruits.

Based on the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 2, I also find a number of surface-level externalities in UNITA operations evidencing Savimbi's efficacy as a military commander. First, under Savimbi's direction, all military and political officers and staff underwent rigorous military training at standing training camps location in different parts of country, including Massive, Jamba, Namibe, and Andulo. The military training in UNITA was so thorough that UNITA commanders who defected to the MPLA, such as General Geraldo Sachipengo Nunda, were often placed in the higher echelons of military leadership for the Angolan Armed Forces. Second, UNITA fighters were placed into specialized guerrilla, semi-regular, and regular units, rising up through these with experience. This suggests a higher level of military sophistication in the organization and a capacity to match the form and intensity of armed violence to tactical objectives. I elaborate on this point in the following section.

## 6.4 The Organizational Management of the UNITA Insurgency

How did Savimbi manage UNITA? Based on the framework presented in Chapter 3, I connect the decisions that Savimbi made with respect to organizational management to his motives and prior military experiences. Specifically, I investigate the ways in which Savimbi initially constructed and, then, made adjustments to the organizational structure of UNITA throughout the conflict. I then identify three tools that Savimbi used to insulate himself and his organization from fragmentation.

### Organizational Structure

Savimbi and the early leaders of UNITA were trained by Mao not just in the execution of war and political ideology, but also in the organizational management of an insurgency, including how to training fighters and how to structure its operations (L8). As a result, the organizational structure of UNITA was remarkably sophisticated, resembling the organization of more advanced state militaries. During the Angolan Civil War, UNITA's organizational structure with respect to size and centralization changed at critical parts of the conflict, as Savimbi adjusted to significant shifts in the conflict environment. First, UNITA adopted a more centralized command structure in the late-1970s and maintained this arrangement for the duration of the conflict. Second, the Finally, corresponding to the changes in its military strategy and increased flow of eternal support, UNITA increased its size twenty-fold between 1975 and 1990. These changes can be explained as a direct product of Savimbi's pattern of leadership. UNITA maintained specialized political and military wings until 1993. It then condensed these efforts into a single organizational

### Centralization

With respect to centralization, UNITA changed its structural form of command at an early point in the conflict. Following the 1975 retreat from Huambo, UNITA was forced to maintain a more decentralized system of command, where more isolated units were assigned to specific "liberated zones" and given greater agency in day-to-day decision-making (L8). These units would enter into a territory and, upon being engaged by superior forces, retreat and attack in hit-and-run operations along the way out. This is typical of a nascent Maoist-type insurgency. At this stage, UNITA boasted not more than 4,000 fighters while the joint MPLA and Cuban forces had an approximate total of 18,000 troops—12,000 from Cuban and 6,000 from the MPLA (Guimarães 2001). The Cubans had also spearhaded the MPLA offensive into the central highlands with MIG-21s and Soviet tanks. Grossly outmatched, UNITA was forced by this military pressure to decentralize. In other words, UNITA's decentralized structure at this time was not the result of a baseline preference, but a strategic reaction to external pressures.

This is not to say that Savimbi relinquished complete control of the decision-making in the early stages of the war, only that tactical decision making was left to unit commanders who would later report their activity to Savimbi and the UNITA leadership. Savimbi held his commanders and fighters to a Case in point, in 1975, in the same speech in which he announced the independence of the Democratic People's Republic of Angola—an alternative christening of the Angolan state meant to attract pro-democratic backers—Savimbi warned against undisciplined behavior in the ranks. Responding to soldiers firing their guns in the air in celebration of the announcement, Savimbi paused his speech to rebuke his troops, "If tonight, or any other time from now onwards any UNITA soldier fires a shot without an order, it will be his last shot [...] If we catch you firing a gun, you will not move again from that spot" (Bridgland 1986: 134).

After 1980, centralization remained a consistent, key feature of the group's organizational structure, where decision-making was concentrated to the upper levels of UNITA. Orders were passed from Savimbi to the Chief of Staff to tactical commanders (front leaders) and then to unit commanders. When asked what made UNITA so successful on the battlefield in the 1980s, a former battalion leader responded, "The discipline was the most important part of UNITA" (B1). "Discipline was an important weapon in [UNITA]....People rarely disobeyed. When a solider did [disobey orders], they were not killed; they were captured, imprisoned, and retrained. [That person] could acknowledge the mistake and return" (L8). Neither did the degrees of accountability vary by rank. Another former UNITA brigadier general was clear on this point, "No one received special treatment. All were help accountable" (L3). This level of discipline is even more remarkable when understood in the light that no UNITA fighter or officer was financially compensated for their work in the organization (L12). Human Rights Watch records, that even into the most intense areas of military engagement, that Savimbi would personally "travel to sensitive fronts to make his own assessments" (HRW 1994: 26).

UNITA developed a system of rules, a law of land warfare for each of its units. For example, as recounted by a former commander, UNITA trained its guerrilla units in "12 Commandments", shown below.[22] Of all the unit types—special forces, regular, semi-regular, and guerrilla—guerrilla were the most embedded with the local population and requires the most training in engaging non-combatants. Savimbi would quote Mao to his fighters: "These people are the sea we swim in!". Moreover, these policies were strictly enforced. Punishment for key infractions often involved severe public torture or death (H1).

Savimbi stood atop both the political and military wings and operations of UNITA. He "hoarded information and kept constant tabs on group movements and status" (). Every

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[22]These commandments are presented verbatim as they were told to me in english, translated from Portuguese. It is likely that the original version of these rules differ slightly in its language compared to what is shown here.

Table 6.2: The 12 Commandments of the UNITA Guerrilla Fighter

1. Speak delicately.
2. Pay honestly for everything you buy.
3. Give back everything you borrow.
4. Pay for everything you damage.
5. Do not disrespect other people.
6. Do not damage the people's crops.
7. Do not assault other people's women.
8. Do not steal and do not deviate the general assets of anyone.
9. Do not use drugs.
10. Do not abuse alcohol.
11. Love and respect above all your peasantry.
12. Be responsible and conscious of your mission.

commander would answer both to their immediate officer and to the office of Jonas Savimbi. Like military decisions, political operations were also highly centralized. Martin James (2011) records that UNITA's "political philosophy was based on the principle of 'Democratic Centralism". Debate upon potential policy was allowed up and down the political structure, but when a decision was made it was followed without question" (100). As expected of a leader with prior military training and combat experience, Savimbi quickly constructed a system of command that was highly centralized. Like a military leader, he was able to adapt to temporary decentralized arrangements, but ultimately preferred to monitor and control his forces as directly as possible.

**Specialization**

UNITA at its inception was first and foremost a political organization. The military arm of UNITA , called the *Forcas Armadas de Libertacao de Angola* (FALA), was formed in 1966. Meaning, from the very beginning of the Angolan Civil War, UNITA was structurally

specialized into political and military wings. UNITA, in practice, was not properly military active until 1966 and, even then, it was a number of years until the organization grew into a viable military threat. Even in 1970, UNITA was responsible for only four percent of the attacks against the Portuguese forces (James 2011: 94). Prior to its military strength, UNITA leaders, including Jonas Savimbi, were found throughout the country cultivating support among the local population. While it had only approximately 3,000 fighters in 1972, it boasted roughly 3,000 active party branches and claimed the support of 1.5 million Angolans (UNITA 1972: 4). The balance between the group's military and political operations became far more even following the onset of the civil war in 1975.

As accounted by Samuel Chiwale, a former UNITA brigadier general and a member of the "Chinese Eleven", by November 1975, UNITA was organized in three fronts. These were led by Samuel Chiwale, Jonas Savimbi and Miguel N'Zau Puna. Each front featured three infantry platoons which possessed three 60mm mortar platoons, three 4.5 inch mortar platoons, and three 50-inch Browning machine gun platoons (Chiwale 2008: 215-216). The military capability of UNITA, at this point, was still very modest with only an estimated 3,000 total fighters. It wasn't until 1979 that UNITA began to develop its "semi-regular" units, which were meant to carry out more intensive military operations, including capturing and holding territory. In 1980, conventional or "regular" battalions and special forces units were included.[23] This followed a strategic decision to boost the group's military capacity. According to notes from a May 1976 meeting of the UNITA Central Committee, UNITA voted "to reorganize the command of Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FALA), in order to clearly redefine the politico-military aims....of our Party's minimum programme." This programme was to develop a military apparatus that would allow UNITA to force the MPLA and Cubans to the bargaining table (James 2011: 95).[24]

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[23]John Turner, May 1992, "Angolan Vs. Angolan: Battle of Mavinga," Museum Ordnance, Vol.2(3): 191.
[24]Source: "Final Communique of the Conference of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee With the Participation of the Political and Military Cadres," U.N.I.T.A., 7-10 May 1976: 2.
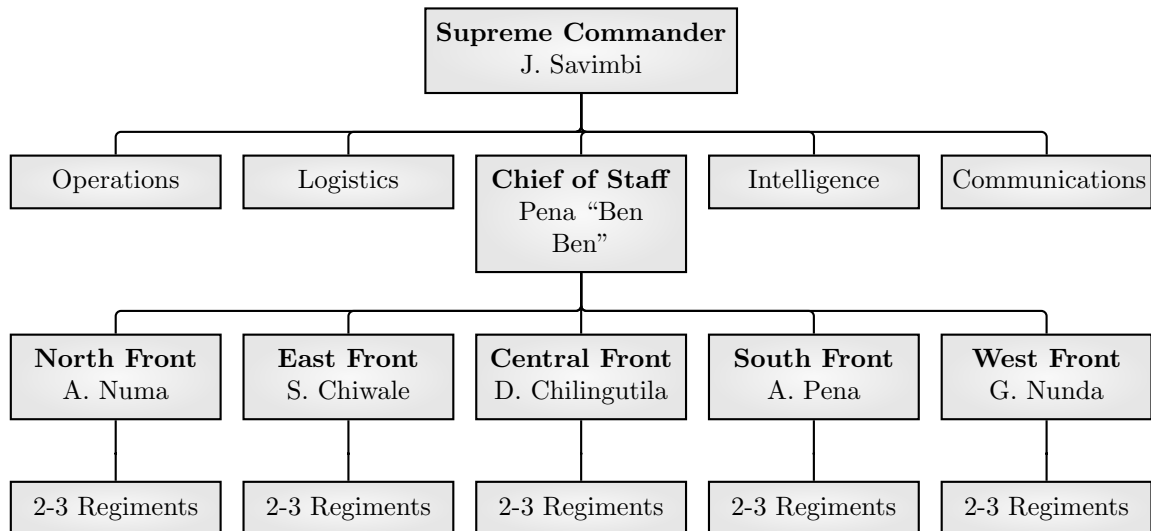
Table 6.3 displays the organizational structure of FALA as it existed from 1980 through 1990. As mentioned, from 1975 to 1980, the group was in the process of mobilizing troops and building its military capabilities beyond its original guerrilla units. In the process, UNITA transitioned from a decentralized system into the centralized structure shown here. At this point, UNITA featured five different military "fronts", each of which had two to three regiments. Each regiment was broken up into different combinations of special forces, regular, semi-regular, and guerrilla units, depending on the strategic needs of the front. For example, Jamba had no less than five regular battalions present at any time and, sometimes up to ten. During this period, each military region or district was allocated at least one semi-regular battalion (L3). This Table 6.3 shows the names of the individuals responsible for each front in 1990, though these fluctuated as Savimbi rotated leaders between stations.[25]

In addition to the fighting corps, UNITA had various branches positioned within FALA that were responsible for supporting the military mission. Specific branches for operation, intelligence, logistics, and communications were constructed. In 1990, General Pena "Ben Ben" was the Chief of Staff, though he would soon be sent to help lead the joint FAA force. The intelligence branch was led by General Peregrino Chindondo. Demosthenes Chilingutila, for a time, simultaneously led commander of the Central Front and as the FALA Chief of Operations. Brigadier General Jeronimo Ukama was Chief of Logistics. These branches were coordinated by Savimbi and the Chief of Staff to maximize military effectiveness.

In addition to its immense military command, UNITA had a highly sophisticated political structure. A national congress was held at various stages of the insurgency. Shown in Figure 6.4, UNITA's political structure featured multiple tiers which corresponded to different geographical scopes and locations. At the national level, the president was both the highest ranking member of the political wing and the commander-in-chief of the FALA forces.

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[25]For example, even in this limited window, a number of sources suggest that General António Dembo was also responsbile for parts of the Northern Front, with General Numa. Dembo was appointed Vice-President of UNITA in 1992.

Table 6.3: UNITA Military Structure (FALA), 1990

| | | **Supreme Commander**<br>J. Savimbi | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Operations | Logistics | **Chief of Staff**<br>Pena "Ben Ben" | Intelligence | Communications |
| **North Front**<br>A. Numa | **East Front**<br>S. Chiwale | **Central Front**<br>D. Chilingutila | **South Front**<br>A. Pena | **West Front**<br>G. Nunda |
| 2-3 Regiments | 2-3 Regiments | 2-3 Regiments | 2-3 Regiments | 2-3 Regiments |

Savimbi was "re-elected" in every Congress from 1966. He then would appoint a secretary general under him who was responsible for the mobilization and management of UNITA's political operations in Jamba and the territory controlled by UNITA. While others such as Ernesto Manuvacola served stints at Secretary General, Miguel N'Zau Puna was the organization's longest-standing political leader, holding the post of secretary general from 1968 to 1991. The Central Committee was responsible for overseeing the political chapters of UNITA and the services distributed to those communities. James (2011) reports that the Party Congresses, which were held every four years, appointed the 55 Central Committee members. UNITA was then broken up into regional, district, and municipal committees which were responsible for overseeing the day-to-day political operations at these levels. At the regional level, a commissar's mandate or jurisdiction typically corresponded to one of FALA's military regions. At the local level, there were both village or municipal committees as well as "cells" which typically was three to four persons. Cells would report to the village committee, who would report to the regional committee, who, in turn, gave a full repot to the central committee. In other words, the political operations of UNITA were as centralized

Table 6.4: UNITA Political Structure
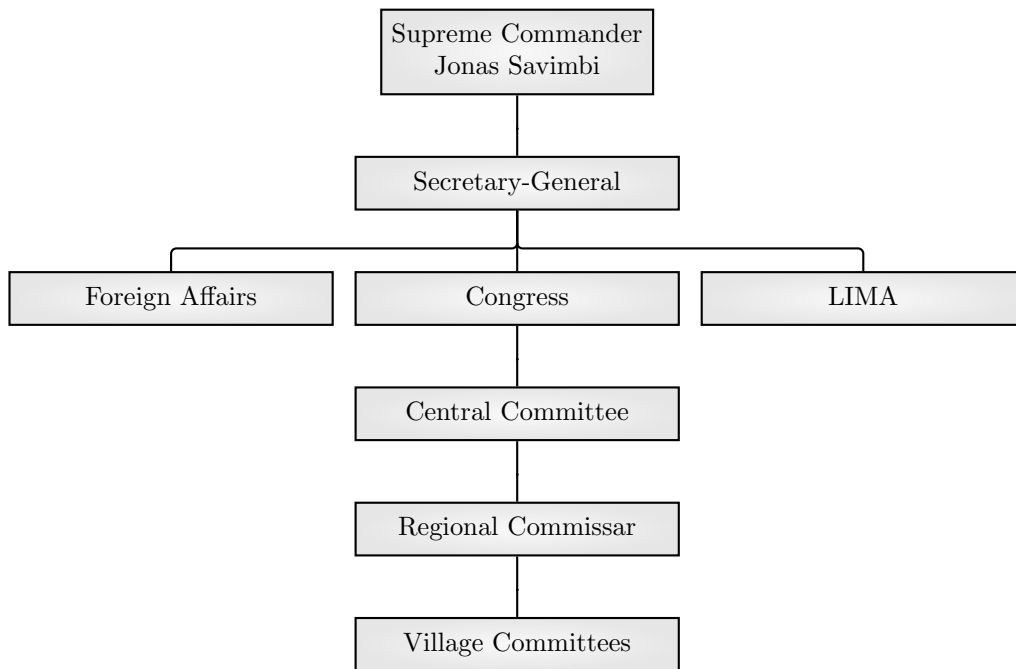


as the organization's military operations.

UNITA also had an impressive diplomatic corps, with permanent representative in Dakar, Geneva, London, Washington D.C., Lisbon, Rome, Paris, Munich, and Rabat.[26] By the mid-1990s, UNITA maintained twelve offices abroad: two in the United States (Washington and New York), seven in Europe, and three in Africa (Huang 2016). Some of UNITAs most promising leaders held diplomatic posts for large portions of the conflict, such as Isaias Samakuva, Abel Chivukuvuku, Adalberto de Costa Jr., Tony Fernandes, and Jorge Chikoti. Placing such immense talent and human capital in these positions indicates the emphasis that Jonas Savimbi placed on maintained and developing the organization's foreign relationships.

Lastly, UNITA also developed a separate branch within its political wing for women called the *Liga da Mulhere Angolana* (LIMA). Like the political committees, LIMA had national, regional, and village level committees or delegates and these often worked in concert. In

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[26] "Apathetic Response to New UN UNITA Resolution," *Africa Analysis*, November 14, 1997: 6.

practice, LIMA served a critical political and logistical role in UNITA and its "liberated territories". Members would help to mobilize women in key areas, hosting workshops and bringing families into the political fold of UNITA. LIMA workers also helped to train men and women in providing logistical support of UNITA's military efforts, especially the cultivation of food and the transport of goods (L9). LIMA leaders and workers would also assist in the development and administration of UNITA's schools.

Generally, UNITA leaders were (1) trained in both political and military operations and (2) many of them were delegated into positions in both wings at different times. General Eugenio Manuvakola, a senior guerrilla commander, later served as the UNITA secretary-general. Miguel N'zau Puna, a front commander in the early stages of the war, was simultaneously UNITA's political general-secretary (L5). Even the organization's diplomats were required to go through UNITA's military training program. In addition, while very few women participated at combatants in UNITA, all members of LIMA also received military training (L9).

One note about the degree of popular representation in the organization. UNITA did hold a national congress, but many group leaders were quick to clarify that UNITA was not a democratic organization. It was focused on achieving military victory during war. "How could we spend time with deliberation and democracy?", said one former political commander, "the war needed to be won" (L11). The Politburo and Political Commission were bureaucratic apparati for executing the political agenda of UNITA, overseeing mobilization, and building relationships with foreign nations. While they may have served to offer feedback to UNITA leadership, decisions with respect to military and political strategy were never decisions left to UNITA supporters or the rank-and-file by way of popular vote. That said, UNITA established highly developed systems of governance and political operations at the national, provincial, and municipal levels; sometimes even in contested territories.

## Size

Jonas Savimbi maintained a relatively strong hand over the recruitment drives, careful to provide enough troops necessary to its but also wary of overextending beyonds its military or logistical capacity. Prior to 1975, UNITA's military was by far the weakest of the three armed liberation forces. It received relatively little external support, with access to safe haven in Zambia ending in 1967. As it became apparent to Savimbi that both military and political victory would require UNITA to expel the Cuban forces and force the MPLA government to the negotiation table, he immediately began preparations to increase the size of his military forces. Indeed, during the war for independence, UNITA was largely a grassroots political movement, with a number of small guerrilla units that engaged in hit-and-run attacks. It was not a prominent military force. According to estimates from the United States State Department, UNITA could only claim 300 active fighters in 1971 and only 600-800 troops in 1974, with most being inexperienced fighters. A notable exception to this inexperience were the "UNITA Eleven" who traveled to Beijing in 1965 to train in guerrilla tactics under the advisement of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung. UNITA's own estimates of their size in 1974 is roughly 3,000, and other internal sources seem to corroborate this projection. In 1970, UNITA's largest battalion had 100 soldiers, by 1975 they had multiple 300-men brigades armed with 40mm and 60mm mortars and FN, G2, and Mauser rifles (Bridgland 1987: 91).

Following the MPLA offensive into the central highlands in 1975, especially Huambo, UNITA was forced to retreat to the eastern and southern provinces. At that time, UNITA had a total force of some 4,000 concentrated in Huambo (L8). Facing the arrival of an incoming, more powerful military force, UNITA decided to flee their short-lived headquarters quickly. Roughly 3,000 of these sent to form bases in the bush for guerrilla attacks (Pearce 2015: 56). That left 1,000 UNITA followers, including 400 civilians, to depart the central highlands on foot, beginning the "Long March". Six months later, of these, only 300 made it to Kuando

Kubango (L5). UNITA's military and political training grounds were moved from Massive to Kuando Kubango and Cunene. In 1976 - 1977, the decision was made to recruit immediately 4,000 more troops, adding to its already active force of then 8,000 soldiers (Savimbi 1976). The push for growth in the years that followed was made possible by the support of South Africa and other regional backers.

From 1981 to 1990, UNITA oversaw a massive mobilization campaign, eventually increasing its troop size by a factor of ten. Simultaneously, UNITA and its foreign supporters continued to train and equip its forces for conventional warfare. Nearing its peak in 1985, the size of the organization mostly remained steady from that point, with around 78,000 active fighters. By 1990, the FALA forces could claim 20,000 regular troops, 18,000 semi-regular, 20,000 compact guerrillas, and as many as 30,000 dispersed guerrillas (HRW 1994, James 2011: 97). A total estimated troop size of 78,000 fighters. This generally mirrors other estimates provided by commanders active at the time, who suggested, at its peak in 1988, that UNITA had 80,000 - 85,000 troops (L5). Most guerrilla units contained 15-20 soldiers, with approximately 500 in each semi-regular unit and 1,500 in each regular battalions (L1). By the mid-1980s, when UNITA was at its full strength, the organization controlled up to 75% of the country's territory. This territory was not only sparsely-populated rural space; a United Nations report estimates that UNITA controlled 105 of the 165 municipalities in Angola.

The 1991 Bicesse Accords required 150,000 troops to be demobilized between the rebel and government armies. As part of this process, UNITA was to send 26,300 troops to join the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA). UNITA is estimated to have maintained at least 30,000 active fighters at this time by U.S. State Department officials (Fortna 2003:76). A relaunch of the insurgency followed the failed presidential elections in 1992 and UNITA quickly built on these numbers to recruit a new generation of UNITA fighters. Over the next few years, until the Lusaka Protocol was signed in 1994, UNITA adjusted its military strategy to focus

on key urban centers. As a result, while mobilization was sustained during this period, the rebel forces also incurred heavy casualties. The 1993 siege of Huambo alone was estimated to cost UNITA 15,000 casualties. The sieges in Kuito and Melanje were equally costly. This shift to urban warfare did not come easy to UNITA, who had been executing and training for warfare in rural terrain.

From 1995 to 1998, UNITA mobilization and recruitment continued, but slowed considerably. As it gained recruits, it lost more to the battlefield, defection, or desertion. As support from the U.S. and South Africa was no longer available, UNITA turned to purchase military training, arms, and tanks from Russia. An ironic reversal from meeting one another as enemies on the battlefield not even a decade earlier. UNITA funded its military campaign, including its illicit arms purchases, almost solely from profits gained by the sale of diamonds out of the Lunda regions. According to a Human Rights Watch report by Alex Vines, the De Beers diamond cartel and other international dealers were the key patrons of this trade (HRW 1996). Most diamonds were smuggled across Zaire's southern border, and to a lesser extent, the Zambian border. De Beers admits to spending $500 million on Angolan diamonds in 1992 alone. In total, the illicit diamond trade is estimated to have generated $3.72 billion in revenues for UNITA between 1992 and 1998 (Seymour 2000). Even with these revenues, UNITA sustained consistent losses on the battlefield. Over these years, the MPLA made gradual but steady gains, capturing key diamond production sites and pushing UNITA further into the central highlands. With the loss of this revenue, UNITA lost the financial capacity to support, arm, and train a conventional force.

By 1999 and through 2002, UNITA was severely weakened. It had little capacity for mobilization as the organization was forced into a defensive military strategy, even one of avoidance. Simultaneously, UNITA faced considerable troop fallout due to its inability to feed its soldiers and a general lack of logistical support. Many chose to defect or demobilize rather than starve (L7). As such, commanders estimate that UNITA had approximately

15,000 troops during these final years, though the total number of active troops was likely even smaller in the final moments preceding Savimbi's death.

Table 6.5: Estimated Size of UNITA Fighting Forces, 1975 – 2002

| Years | Best Estimate | Lowest Estimate | Highest Estimate |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1975 – 1980 | 8,000 | 1,000 | 8,000 |
| 1981 – 1990 | 78,000 | 28,000 | 90,000 |
| 1991 – 1994 | 65,000 | 65,000 | 75,000 |
| 1995 – 1998 | 35,000 | 10,000 | 35,000 |
| 1999 – 2002 | 15,000 | 15,000 | 15,000 |

Estimates based on interviews with former UNITA fighters and commanders.

As evidenced here, the size of UNITA vacillated dramatically over the course of its 27-year campaign. By the time that Savimbi was killed, the organization had nearly already dissipated, a shadow of its former strength. Were these changes in size stochastic or did Savimbi have some agency in shaping the size of armed forces? The trends in UNITA's size over the course of the conflict correspond with the expectation of my theoretical framework, suggesting that Savimbi made some effort to control the size of the organization to match the strategic needs and tactical forms of the insurgency. As the group moved from guerrilla units to semi-regular and, finally, to regular battalions, Savimbi expanded the organization accordingly. Mobilization campaigns were implemented to match the determined need for troops based on the strategies employed. And Savimbi's inclusive political agenda increased his capacity to mobilize more troops when determined to be strategically and operationally optimal. Conversely, losses in numbers after 1992 were mostly due to the group's struggle to acquire sufficient and consistent means to support a greater number of troops.

## Endurance to Fragmentation

UNITA never fragmented into competing, armed factions. It suffered a multiple periods of significant defections—especially during the final decade of the conflict—but a UNITA

subcommander never attempted to siphon a force from the UNITA corps to create a new armed group. There is much we can learn about fragmentation by looking at the silence. The absence of fragmentation in this case is particularly intriguing as UNITA experienced a number of events which existing structural theories would predict to make fragmentation quite likely. It's even more remarkable that UNITA, which waged war for more than 25 years, never splintered. Other rebel organizations with similar durations of activity, such as the FARC in Columbia, the LTTE in Sri Lanka, or the PKK in Turkey cannot claim this achievement.

In this section, I first identify a number of times when UNITA was especially vulnerable to fragmentation, based on existing explanations of this outcome. I then describe how Savimbi maintained sufficiently high levels of cohesion to avoid possible splinter factions from emerging. In particular, three key factors should have increased the probability that UNITA split: unsteady support of international and regional states, the availability and extortion of natural resources, and the negotiation of various peace agreements.[27] Instead, UNITA stayed unified. Below, I briefly describe these dynamics as they were experienced by UNITA before describing the methods by which Savimbi maintained a strong hold on the organization's leadership.

Many explanations of fragmentation emphasize the role of external actors, the onset of peace negotiations, and the accessibility of natural resources to both conflict parties.[28] All of these factors are certainly present in the Angolan Civil War. First, much has been made of the internationalization of the Angolan conflict. During this lengthy armed struggle, the country was caught up in the geopolitical fray of the global Cold War. At varying levels

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[27]While these factors—external actors, the ebb and flow of peace talks, and the availability of "lootable" natural resources—certainly played a role in shaping conflict dynamics and constraining the political environment, accounts that focus on these elements to explain the dynamics and outcomes of the Angolan Civil War are over-simplistic. Instead, the case of UNITA offers useful insight into organizational dynamics offer useful leverage to understand and explain rebel management and cohesion.

[28]For a more thorough review of this literature, please see Chapter 1.

and at different times, the United States, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), East Germany, China, Cuba and others poured money, arms, and troops to the opposing forces. Moreover, many regional state leaders—e.g. Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Frederick Chiluba of Zambia, Samuel Nujoma of Namibia, and Pieter Willem Botha of South Africa—reacted to both the perceived threats and opportunities that the Angolan conflict presented to their political agendas. Many other African leaders were involved, even if marginally, in the conflict as well. Leaders from Morocco, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, the Republic of the Congo, Kenya, and Ghana all played some role in choosing sides. The Angolan Civil War was a regional stage for African foreign policy. It is important to emphasize: at no point was the Angolan conflict lost of its domestic origins or motives. It was for the duration of the struggle an *Angolan* war exacerbated by international and regional parties.

A number of fragmentation studies emphasizes the divisive role that external sponsors can play in a rebel organization (Tamm 2016; Lidow 2016). And UNITA certainly struggled, in the context of regional and international politics, to find and maintain a suitable combination of external supporters. One former UNITA officer remembers Jonas Savimbi bemoaning this issue: "Our problem is that we are not good at making the right friends" (L5). Savimbi's partnership with the Apartheid South Africa government came a great cost, whereby UNITA almost immediately lost the support of other African states such as neighboring Namibia and Zambia. this reflected a strategic calculation on the part of Savimbi. While receiving initial support from China, Savimbi decided to drop China's support in exchange for the more proximate South Africa, believing that the proximity of the two countries was critical to UNITA receiving suitable support. This decision was strongly contested by a number of commanders, including . Once committed to South Africa, UNITA was more prone to attract the direct support of the United States. The passing of the Clark Amendment in 1976, however, required the United States to provide covert support rather than open diplomatic and military backing. The Clark Amendment was repealed in 1985, leaving only a few years

during which the U.S. would maintain a strategic interest in supporting the Angolan rebels. During these years, however, the U.S. greatly improved UNITA's logistical and military capabilities, helping the organization to wage more direct conventional strategies against the joint Cuban-Soviet-MPLA forces. UNITA officially lost the support of South Africa and the United States following the signing of New York Accords in December 1988. The signing of the Bicesse Accords soon followed, marking the start of a long-winded defeat of the UNITA insurgency. The inconsistent support of foreign states—and their political alignment—imposed considerable stress on UNITA's structural cohesion as leaders debated Savimbi's ability to obtain *sufficient* support from the *right* supporters.

Second, participating in peace talks in Nakuru, Gbadolite, Bicesse, Addis Ababa, Abijon and Lusaka, UNITA went through multiple multi-round negotiations during the conflict. Peace talks often spark episodes of fragmentation as a result of more moderate or extreme factions split to carry on the fight in the way they believe will more effectively achieve group objectives or that offers a greater change of claiming a sizable portion of the settlement terms. True to form, the peace negotiations were hotbeds of contention within UNITA as groups leaders debated the terms of these negotiations and whether UNITA should be engaging in peace talks at all. At these moments, UNITA was almost certainly at its least unified. For example, Eugenio Manuvacola, who represented UNITA in the signing of the 1994 Lusaka Protocol may have done so in direct contrast to Savimbi's orders. One commander at Lusaka during the signing states that "....two to three before the scheduled signing day, Savimbi told [Manuvacola] to leave Lusaka...but UNITA needed a peace agreement....so [Manuvacola] signed the agreement alone anyway (L2, L11). Before doing so, Manuvacola reportedly asked to receive letters from the representatives of the observing states, including Madeleine Albright. By the end, "Savimbi would only be convinced by outside powers. This is the weakness of long-lasting leadership" (L2). When he returned, Manuvacola was imprisoned

by Savimbi.[29]

Lastly, some accounts of the Angolan Civil War focus on the role of natural resources as sources of funding for both the MPLA government and UNITA rebels. For rebel forces, it is often argued that the systematic extortion of natural resources undermines organizational cohesion as subcommanders are tempted to profit from the available revenues. On the government side, the MPLA forces largely relied on oil revenues extracted from the production of oil in Cabinda, while UNITA made a strategic priority of controlling the mining of diamonds in the north-east and eastern provinces of the country.[30] To expand the military capabilities of the state MPLA leader and Angolan president Jose Eduardo dos Santos made oil production an economic priority.[31]. The sale and "looting" of natural resources played almost no role in UNITA during the first half of the Angolan Civil War. Following the loss of support from the U.S. and South Africa and the economic sanctions placed in UNITA by the United Nations in 1993, Savimbi began to target the supply of alluvial diamonds available in the Lunda regions. Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul are rural province in north-east Angola which border the Democratic Republic of Congo. Even under sanctions from the United Nations, Savimbi arranged to have the diamonds from these operations sold mostly from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia. From 1993-1997, tax revenues for the operations around the diamond industry brought in roughly $4.5 million per week. UNITA levied a 30% tax on all transport, food, medicine, and beer coming into the region, with 25-30 such planes arriving each day. In addition to the purchase price of the diamonds coming from the Lunda

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[29]Even today, when asked what led to UNITA's defeat in the war, many former UNITA commanders and fighters were more quick to point to the Bicesse Accords than anything else. UNITA, these argue, should have pressed their military advantage and claimed the capital city of Luanda. Others believe that UNITA should have pursued peace even earlier. There is still—more than 15 years later—a division regarding how UNITA participated in these negotiations.

[30]Prior to the conflict, the most profitable revenue in Angola came from the high profitable coffee industry; agricultural products accounted for over 60% of all exports in the mid-1960s. Because of the conflict, however, Angolan coffee production decreased from 4,030,000 bags in 1972 to 250,000 in 1988 (James III 1992).

[31]Though the United States supported UNITA intermittently, U.S.-based oil companies such as Gulf Oil supported the MPLA's key source of financial support: oil exports from the Cabinda province.

provinces, UNITA also taxed these sales at 30% (L7, H1). According to the commanders who ran UNITA's financial operations in the Lundas, Israel, Portugal, and Belgium were the most common and substantial patrons of UNITA's diamond industry (L10).

Given UNITA's exposure to these divisive factors, why did the organization not experience fragmentation? Specifically, how did Savimbi's military experience and motives for conflict keep subcommanders from mobilizing their own armed factions? This resiliency was borne of three factors which I argue stem from the leadership patterns associated with Savimbi's leader type: (1) socialization of political ideology and universal burden sharing, (2) the shuffling of UNITA's ranking subcommanders, and (3) monitoring and punishment. These three practices insulated Savimbi from internal challengers by increasing the costs of mobilizing a competitive faction from within the ranks of UNITA.

First, Savimbi developed a political and organizational strategy which stressed strict ideological training and a common sharing of the burden of revolution. "Dr. Savimbi's slogan was 'The victory is a permanent state of spirit.' We believe in this sentiment. [It] always motivated us. We were always ready to consent and sacrifice. Especially to gain the political power," recounted a current MP who was raised and educated in Jamba (L9). Generally, ideological commitment is strongest among elites in an organization, while lay members are more self-interested and adhere to 'only fragments of [the] larger ideology'. The political and military leadership of a group attempts to instill ideological commitment among ground-level forces through a process of indoctrination and training, or 'military socialization'. (Thaler 2012: 549; Barnes 1966: 513-530). UNITA seemed to enjoy a higher level of mass adoption of its principals. Savimbi, in particular, was highly engaged with the political programming of new recruits. Indeed, *Washington Post* reporter Leon Dash recounts that Savimbi personally taught a course for political commissars who were sent from military camps to peasant villages.

To this point, a former senior UNITA commander argued that "The political work is why

UNITA never fragmented. It created a consciousness of the people" (L3). This echoes a nascent strain in the academic literature which finds that indoctrination and norm internalization (Hoover Green 2016; Green 2018) are common ways by which rebel leaders cultivate in-group cohesion. Leaders institute socialization processes that ensure group members internalize group norms through political education and transformational experiences that alter beliefs and promote allegiance to the group. Military training, drills, and exercises play an important role in these socialization processes (King 2013) as well as facing a common enemy and overcoming shared threats (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Kenny 2010). This was certainly at-play in UNITA, where all combatants and commanders were required to complete a thorough, multi-week political training program. As highlighted earlier, UNITA fighters in guerrilla and semi-regular units were given the "12 commandments", strict rules by which they were held accountable. These principals and the strict systems of training by which they were imputed to new fighters was critical to the cultivation of a common commitment to the group's cause.

UNITA's also invested in the governance of its key territorial hubs, which provided the means by which to standardize and control the ideological principals imparted to group members. Most notably, Jamba, a town in the far south-eastern corner of Angola, in the province of Kuando Kubango, was created by Jonas Savimbi—with the help of South Africa and the United States, as UNITA's alternative capital of the Angolan state. It hosted roughly 10,000 civilians in 1979, though these numbers likely increased through the 1980s (L8). UNITA always saw the need for a "parallel hierarchy" through which they intended to develop an administrative apparatus for the provision of social services, including agriculture, education, and healthcare. UNITA had several hospitals and schools, political training centers, and courts where local civil disputes were addressed. In effect, "UNITA established a sophisticated socio-economic infrastructure which amounts to nothing less than a state-within-a-state" (L8) UNITA official Jardo Muekalia emphasized the importance of Jamba to UNITA's

political mission: "...as the capital of resistance, [Jamba] represented the symbol of our force and the expression of our organizational capacity' through the provision of "electricity, running water,....schools for primary and secondary education, a secretarial school, a Protestant and a Catholic church" (Pearce 2015: 107). The quality and breadth of this infrastructure varied across the conflict, being at its strongest from 1976 through 1992, at the UNITA headquarters in Jamba. This highly developed program at Jamba served two main purposes: (1) it increased the perceived legitimacy of the UNITA organization among the local population and (2) it offered a system of ideological and political training for both UNITA fighters and the civilians living in the territories controlled by UNITA.

Burden sharing was also immensely important to the perceived authenticity of UNITA's political agenda. Savimbi and the rest of UNITA leadership received no monetary compensation during the conflict, neither did its foot soldiers or other members (L5, L7). This allowed the organization to devote its resources to the purchase of arms, fuel, and food and the provision of services to populations living in controlled territories. As an exception, UNITA officers sent on diplomatic missions were given monthly stipends of roughly \$400.00 per month, though this hardly allowed for extravagant living and was eventually cut to \$350.00 per month (L1). In other words, the evidence of Savimbi sharing in the costs of war reduced the perceived benefits of leadership, suggesting, all else equal, that subcommanders would be less likely to go the costly. Moreover, this common experience of sacrifice likely contributed to the socialization of commanders within the organization, where they bonded over the mutual costs given to the success of the movement. Kenny (2010) writes about a similar dynamic among members in the Provisional IRA, where participation in the 1981 hunger strike "reinforced the sense in which loyalty to the organization was demanded by the blood sacrifices made in its name" (545). This sort of burden sharing strengthens the bond of the individual to the organization.

A second means by which Savimbi maintained cohesion in the organization was the "shuf-

fling" of key commanders around to different positions in the leadership. The shuffling of group elites and potential challengers is a technique applied by authoritarian leaders as part of their coup-proofing strategy. This logic has not yet been applied to the study of rebel leadership, however, though these actors face similar threats. Shuffling—the frequent rotation of officials from one position to another—is a tactic used to prevent group elites from forming too close a bond, to disperse them around the organization before they have a chance to "form alternative centers of power with which to challenge the ruler" (Woldense 2017: 154). In a similar way, my interviews reveal that key leaders in UNITA were often shifted around the organization. For instance, lieutenants in UNITA would be assigned and reassigned between political and military posts or from one front to the other. In other cases, potential challengers were sent on diplomatic missions to foreign countries. With the notable exception of Miguel N'Zau Puna, who acted as General-Secretary of the organization from 1968 until 1991, few ranking commanders held a single position in the top leadership for more than a few years consecutively.

For example, Demosthenes Amos Chilingutila, who was named among the likely replacements for Savimbi in 1984, changed functional positions of leadership four times from 1980 to 1990 (Dohning 1984). From 1979 to 1985, Chilingutila was the Chief of Staff of the FALA forces. He was demoted temporarily to the post of Operational Commander, but was invited to return his former position in 1986 after the unexpected death of his replacement.[32] During that time, General Chilingutila oversaw the UNITA operations at Cuito Cuanavale. In 1990, he was again demoted to Chief of Operations (L3), when he was replaced by Savimbi's nephew General Arlindo "Ben Ben" Pena, who served as Chief of Staff until 1998 when he died while being treated for malaria. Generally speaking to this dynamic, one former member of UNITA stated that those who "survived" the longest—i.e. maintained positions of power in the organization—were those that were illiterate, sent to foreign countries, or

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[32] "FALA Personnel Shuffle," *Voice of Resistance of the Black Cockerel*, 15 January 1990.

were not Ovimbundu" as these posed little threat to Savimbi's control of the organization in Angola (L1). Toward the end of the conflict, "Savimbi isolated himself entirely from the top leadership" (L2).

Third and finally, Savimbi developed an extensive system of internal monitoring and severe punishment within the organization. An intelligence and political information officer was placed at each tier and within each unit of the organization (L5). A former secretary-general of UNITA indicated that the military commander of a battalion or front would be required to report back to Savimbi on the happenings of the past week, not knowing which incidents would be also included in the political and information officer's report (L5). This was meant to increase the accuracy and completeness of the reports provided by military commanders. This immersive intelligence apparatus also increased the cost of mobilizing a splinter faction, making it more difficult for subcommanders to mobilize covertly sufficient support for any breakaway faction. Any efforts towards this end would likely be observed by the political officers on the ground.

Correspondingly, failure to perform, suspicion of conspiracy, and open challenges to Savimbi's leadership were severely punished. In many such cases, highly-ranked subcommanders were imprisoned and sometimes tortured in Jamba for months at a time, only to be returned to duty after serving their sentence (L7). For instance, accused of being responsible for an unsuccessful attack at Alto Uama in 1998, General Abila Numa was put in jail in Jamba for six months in 1998. Similarly, General Abilo Nunda had been arrested and imprisoned in 1986 for three months because he publicly decried Savimbi's killing of women accused of witchcraft in Jamba. In a more extreme example, following the receipt of a letter written by Nunda to Savimbi which outlined a number of notable grievances with Savimbi's leadership, Savimbi offered General Nunda's bodyguard $2,500 to have Nunda killed. Instead, the members of the bodyguard refused tipped off Nunda, who eventually defected to the MPLA government in 1993 (L4, P1). In another example, Samuel Chiwale, one of the original Chi-

nese Eleven and a commander in the Western Front, recounts in a memoir published after Savimbi's death that he was accused of conspiring against Savimbi's leadership and severely beaten. He says, "I noticed that some long-standing companions were avoiding me, as though I had a contagious disease. then, as if this were not enough, my wife continued to insist on the subject [of rumors of a plot against Savimbi"[33]. Chiwale describes in this account how he was taken by security forces at 3am one morning and brought before Savimbi who accused Chiwale of plotting against him. Savimbi then had Chiwale beaten for several hours; he was returned to his home covered in blood and left with a broken left arm (Pearce 2015: 115). In short, violent and sometime fatal punishment was a tool used by Savimbi to consolidate power by disincentivizing his commanders from cultivating alternative centers of power in the organization.

This raises the point of a rather dark chapter in the history of UNITA: the killing of Wilson dos Santos and Tito Chingunji. dos Santos and Chungunji were ranking and long-time leaders in UNITA, responsible for UNITA relations in Portugal and the United States, respectively. Wilson and Tito were brothers-in-law. The New York Times reports, that Jonas Savimbi acknowledged that the two men "had problems" with his leadership since late in 1988, but dismissed this as a viable motive as "within the party you have tensions" (NYT 1992). Within the organization, Savimbi claimed that both men had been paid off by the Central Intelligence Agency to overthrow his leadership (L1). The killing of these ranking leaders and the publicization of the event around the world, severely harmed Savimbi and UNITA's reputation abroad.

While never splitting into competing armed factions, UNITA did suffer serious lapses in cohesion. Two episodes are particularly notable. First. UNITA experience a substantial loss in leadership between 1989 and 1993 when group leaders Miguel N'Zau Puna, Geraldo Nunda, Antonio Fernandes, and Jorge Chikoti left to either join the MPLA or form their own

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[33]Samuel Chiwale, *Cruzei-me*: 261-264.

peaceful political parties. All four were high ranking and long-serving leaders of the organization. Puna was secretary-general of UNITA for more than two decades—he had recently been demoted. Tony Fernandes co-founded UNITA with Savimbi in 1966 and had served as the organization's Minster of Foreign Affairs. General Nunda, testified to be a brilliant military mind by both MPLA and UNITA fighters, had been the minister of operations and commander of the western front. He would later lead and coordinate the offensive that killed Savimbi in 2002. Jorge Chikoti was a charismatic political officer who served as the deputy director of foreign affairs in UNITA. This loss of leadership, prompted by a disenchantment with Savimbi's strategy of military victory and the killing of other UNITA commanders, presented UNITA with a loss of key individuals who had been trained, educated, and developed for decades within the movement. Adding further stress to the organization, both Chindondo and Salepeto Pena were killed in Luanda in 1993 during the violence that erupted at the resumption of war. As a result, one of the most difficult struggles faced by UNITA after the 1992 election was proper leadership (L6). In combination, these defections and deaths presented a massive and unmitigable loss of human capital to the organization.

A second notable exception to the structural cohesion of UNITA is the creation of UNITA-Renovado, a political offshoot of UNITA led by Eugenio Manuvakola in 1998. Manuvacola was a ranking political leader in the organization and signed the Lusaka Accords in 1994 on behalf of UNITA. Convinced that military victory was not possible and convicted by the number of soldiers and civilians dying of disease and hunger in UNITA-held territories, Renovado members split to "continue the mission of UNITA while using a strategy of non-violence" (L2). After 1992, UNITA was "stuck in the center of country" with "no logistics and no strategic position ....You cannot fight a guerrilla war from the center [of a territory]. UNITA-Renovado remained intact until Savimbi's death in 2002, during which time it rejoined UNITA following negotiations with UNITA leaders Paulo "Gato" Lumumba and Isaias Suamakuva. This case, while of interest and relevant to this story, does not qualify as a case of fragmentation and

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the Renovado faction did not participate as an armed party to the conflict. Indeed, it was mobilized strictly for the purpose of pursuing interests comparable to those of UNITA through non-violent political activity.

Finally, there was a sustained loss of cohesion and discipline in the 1990s. At this time, the group lost the external support of key foreign supporters, faced strict sanctions imposed by the United Nations, and, eventually, lost access to its lucrative diamond revenues. While UNITA did not properly fragment during this time, it did suffer high levels of defection and desertion throughout the organization. In an interview with IRIN News, Eugenio Manuvakola put it clearly, "Nobody can impose discipline on an empty stomach! The information from those who've abandoned the bush is that the troops are no longer obeying the orders of their commanders. Where the commanders succeed in organizing supplies there is a level of discipline." From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, these issues were rampant throughout the twilight years of the conflict.

# Chapter 7

# Conclusion

Rebel leaders matter. Two research questions motivate and guide this dissertation: (1) do different rebel leader types structure their organizations in unique and corresponding patterns; and (2) under what conditions are rebel leaders more likely to suffer group fragmentation, and does this vary by leader type? By addressing these empirical puzzles in succession, I endeavor to tell the story of insurgent management, centered on a common unit of analysis—the rebel leader. I find evidence that rebel leaders do, in fact, shape the form and cohesion of the organizations they lead.

Armed conflict does not emerge from a vacuum in isolation but from a fervent process of political contention. It is forged by people and tempered by context. Some people, inevitably, shape this process more than others. I've argued that a focus on rebel leaders—the individuals who mobilize and manage insurgent forces—offer potential tremendous insight into the behavior and viability of armed rebel groups in conflict settings. Indeed, if leaders are central to the process of armed intrastate conflict, as I argue here, then we should be able to trace their influence from the earliest stages of mobilization to the firing of the first bullets to the termination of the conflict.

I find that rebel leaders build and lead their organizations in generalizable patterns ac-

cording to their personal characteristics. More specifically, the decisions rebel leaders make with respect to group organization are, in part, a function of two factors: the leader's motivation for conflict and prior military experience. In fact, the intersection of these critical dimensions reveals the existence of four ideal rebel leader types—the Ideologue, the Insurgent, the Operator, and the Warlord.[1] In managing their insurgent organizations, rebel leaders will navigate similar environmental constraints according to their type. For the purposes of testing my argument, I focus on two "snapshots", or critical stages, in the management of armed rebel organizations: organizational structure and organizational cohesion. If my argument is incorrect, we will observe no variation in these outcomes associated with variation in leader type.

In short, the structure of a rebel organization is one of the important decisions that leaders make during a conflict campaign. It is the responsibility of the rebel leader to form an "organizational model that allows her to command and control her agents and that is sufficiently robust to stand up to opponents, but flexible enough to change with new circumstances (Tarow 1994: 136; Haer 2015: 47). Interestingly, little work has been done to connect rebel leaders directly this this essential process. Indeed, we know relatively little at all regarding why rebel groups adopt certain structural forms over others. Speaking to this issue, I offer a leader-based theory of rebel organizational structure, in which a group's structure is not "path determined" by structural endowments, but is shaped by the type of leader at the helm. To make this case, I focus on three dimensions of a rebel group's organizational structure—centralization, specialization, and size—and describe how variation in these factors is shaped by differences in rebel leadership.

Recent studies demonstrate the fragmentation is common to today's conflict landscape. Rudloff and Findley (2016) find that fragmentation has occurred in at least 45% of civil wars

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[1]This dissertation project builds on a pre-existing research agenda which offers an original conceptualization of rebel leaders and evaluates the impact of variation in rebel leader type on the organization and behavior of armed rebel groups in intrastate conflict (Willingham 2017; Doctor and Willingham 2017).

active since 1989. Likewise, of the 171 Sub-Saharan African rebel groups sampled in his data, Michael Woldemariam (2018) finds that 32% of rebel groups split. Why do rebel organizations fragment into competing factions? Existing studies suggest that rebel fragmentation influences a number of important conflict processes, including conflict duration (Findley and Rudloff 2012), the intensity of conflict violence (Cunningham, Bakke and Seymour 2012), and the durability of post-conflict peace (Rudloff and Findley 2016; Nilsson 2010). As such, understanding why rebel organizations splinter carries important implications for both theory and policy. The fragmentation literature emphasize external pressures that compromise the bond between rebel leaders and their followers, such as peace negotiations, external sponsors, pre-war social networks, and relative military capabilities. The empirical record, however, suggests that experiences of rebel fragmentation vary widely within these contexts.

## 7.1 Review

In Chapter Two, I conceptualize rebel leadership and present a novel typology of rebel leaders, reconceptualizing the roles these actors adopt in the management of armed rebel groups. Chapter Three outlines two connected, but unique theories of rebel leaders as they relate to the processes of group formation, organization, and management. In doing so, I tell a sequential story of rebel leaders and group management, highlighting two "snapshots" of that process: structure-forming and cohesion-building.

Chapter Four presents this study's research design and describes the large-N data used to conduct the statistical analysis in this project. To test the hypotheses proposed in this dissertation, I prescribe a mixed methods analysis, complementing my quantitative analyses with a rigorous comparative case study. Despite the attraction of statistical methods for the analysis of intrastate war dynamics, without qualitative information it is difficult to interpret the results and identify where incongruities or ambiguities lie in the statistical tests. Given

the innovative conceptualization and unprecedented focus on rebel leaders that underpins this dissertation project, a mixed methods analysis is especially appropriate. My proposed research design provides the means to explore the generalizability of the specified theoretical expectations and the plausibility of the mechanisms supposed to be driving the expected outcomes. The Rebel Leaders in Civil War dataset (RLCW) identifies and describes 207 rebel leaders in 158 rebel groups across 65 conflicts from 1989 to 2014 (Doctor and Willingham 2017). To our knowledge, RLCW is the first data project of its kind. Necessary for the completion of this dissertation, is the product of a four year effort involving two principal directors and a team of nearly 50 coding assistants. Of course, these data are not only important for testing the hypotheses presented in this dissertation. Overall, RLCW is meant to serve as a public good for years to come, to aid scholars as they continue to develop micro-level explanations of conflict dynamics.

In Chapter Five, I connect leader type and patterns rebel management in a series of statistical models. In particular, I test the effects of variation in leadership on the probability of key differences in a group's structure—i.e. centralization, size, and specialization—and a group's vulnerability to fragmentation. This analysis reveals that leaders have a profound degree of influence over the form and cohesion of their organizations. I elaborate further on this analysis and its results below.

Chapter Six offers a case study analysis of the UNITA insurgency and its leadership in the Angolan Civil War. I draw on data from more than 30 interviews and focus groups with former rebels in Angola as well as other primary and secondary sources. This information facilitates a case study analysis of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), the dominant rebel group in the Angolan Civil War (1975–2002). Jonas Savimbi, whom I code as an Insurgent-type rebel leader, structured his organization in ways predicted by my theoretical framework. UNITA was highly centralized, featured numerous specialized wings, and mobilized a sizable fighting force. Moreover, with respect to rebel cohesion and

fragmentation, many structural theories predict that UNITA would have likely splintered into competing factions. Yet, UNITA remained cohesive until its defeat in 2002. Accordingly, UNITA offers a unique opportunity to evaluate the theoretical mechanisms described in this proposal and to describe how leadership may either exacerbate or mitigate threats to an insurgency's viability. In this chapter, I find that certain managerial practices which correspond with Savimbi's prior military experience and motive for conflict insulated the group from fragmentation. Instead,

## 7.2   Main Findings

The analysis in this dissertation, viewed cumulatively, provides some insight into the broader patterns of management associated with each of the four leader types. I present these here before highlighting the study's notable limitations and contributions.

First, the Ideologue—the leader with no military experience who is motivated to provide some inclusive good—manages a relatively large and decentralized organization which streamlines its political and military operations into into common units. These leaders are the least likely to see their organizations fragment, though they may experience other lapses in cohesion and control. Based on the theoretical framework presented here, the Ideologue is most likely to instill a systems of norms which emphasize commitment, long-term horizons, and inclusivity. It makes sense, then, the the Ideologue is both the most likely to build decentralized command structure, which are most effective when non-structural forms of accountability exist, and the lowest levels of fragmentation. In so far as they control the recruitment process, these leaders should be glad to take on as many volunteer fighters as are willing to join, though they will hesitate to recruit more than their military strategies can sustain. Therefore, barring the presence of a trusted lieutenant with military acumen, the Ideologue will hesitate to mobilize beyond their own capacity to lead a massive military front.

The Ideologue is a not a solider at heart; when the Ideologue recruits fighters, she is also recruiting social workers and administrators. My analysis, accordingly, suggests that they will almost never specialize their forces. Instead, the Ideologue incorporates their fighters directly into their overarching political campaigns.

Second, the Insurgent oversees a rebellion marked by relatively high degrees of centralization, operational specialization, and a larger number of fighting personnel. Standing at the fore of this force, the Insurgent presents a considerable threat to the state, especially when they can retain cohesion within their ranks. Insurgents have a moderately-high probability of fragmentation, and this occurs quite quickly in the their campaigns. Given the Insurgent's prior military experience and inclination to maintain a more inclusive mobilization strategy, they rarely struggle to mobilize sufficient fighters. The Insurgent's main challenge is overcoming the challenges that come from having such a sizable fighting corps. Drawing on their past experience, in comparison to leaders with no combat or military history, the Insurgent is more likely to divide her forces into specialized units. This allows the Insurgent to maintain higher levels of control her forces and focus her own efforts on the military campaign while delegating political operations to a trusted lieutenant.Instead, as they focus on military means to achieve political ends, the Insurgent is most vulnerable to fragmentation following (1) sustained military losses, (2) disagreements regarding the group's political priorities and objectives, or (3) when the Insurgent fails to acquire sufficient resources needed to sustain a viable military campaign. In short, episodes of fragmentation in Insurgent-led groups are rarely opportunistic; they are the result of more practical concerns. While the Insurgent-led rebellion is hardly invulnerable, the Insurgent is often a capable leader whose leadership is likely to emphasize and seek to balance both the military and political aspects essential to a successful rebellion.

The qualitative study of Jonas Savimbi's management of UNITA offers additional insight in the Insurgent type. Generally, I find that UNITA's trajectory in the Angolan Civil War

matches the mechanisms and theoretical expectations particular to a group led by an Insurgent. First, while it started off as a relatively small fighting force—though still larger than many rebel groups ever become—in the course of five years, Savimbi mobilized over 75,000 fighters. UNITA ranks among the top five percent of rebel groups featured in the RLCW dataset with respect to size. Moreover as expected of a leader with military experience, Savimbi exhibited considerable control over the mobilization of new recruits during the conflict, matching troop numbers to the group's military strategy. I also find that Savimbi was quick to centralize command in UNITA and maintained hyper-vigilant oversight of the group's activities, even at the lowest tiers of the organization. The construction of specialized political and military wings is expected of an Insurgent and Savimbi's position at the top of both wings is further indicative of his centralized managerial style. Finally, UNITA never fragmented. In general, Insurgents are relatively susceptible to fragmentation. The case study reveals that Savimbi's management style exposed UNITA to the sorts of events that tend to spark episodes of fragmentation. That said, he took a number of actions to mitigate these risks, e.g. the shuffling of key commanders, the development of a robust monitoring system combined with practices of severe punishment for divisive behavior, and the operation of rigorous and lengthy ideological training programs for all recruits. These all had cohesion-building effects and, often, increased the cost for lieutenants to covertly mobilize a sufficient armed force. As a result, instead of new splinter factions, we observe relatively high levels of defection or desertion among UNITA's top leadership at times of extreme pressure. The evidence presented here with respect to UNITA indicates that the Insurgent .

Third, based on the quantitative, analysis I find that the Operator tends to mobilize a relatively small and centralized organization. It occasionally features a specialized political unit. For the Operator, insurgency is about generating political and physical instability in order to capitalize off of the chaos. Due to their motives, as expected, the Operator oversees an especially exclusive approach to recruitment and makes an effort to construct a robust

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system of oversight and accountability. Agency loss is likely to result in a loss of profit. However, this arrangement is only so effective. The Operator is, of all four leader types, the most likely to see entrepreneurial lieutenants break off to create profitable factions of their own. Viewing these results holistically, the Operator is most likely to suffer lapses in both control and cohesion—and, thus, wield a relatively weak military front—when they are unable to acquire access to sufficient revenue resources. That is, more so than other rebel organizations, the viability of those led by Operators are strongly dependent on their ability to secure profitable streams of revenue. Under these conditions, the Operator can wage a lethal and credible challenge to the incumbent state. The Operator is most vulnerable to counter-insurgent forces when its means of profiteering are localized to a limited geographic space, forcing the Operator to hold a defend territory. Given their tendency to recruit a smaller number of fighters, this can be especially difficult—and unprofitable. Is is worth reiterating that the Operator is the least common leader type featured in RLCW. More work is needed to evaluate the pathways by which this rebel leader type emerges in the conflict environment. In the meantime, my analysis, indicates that the Operator has the capacity to wield a deadly, though lean war campaign.

Finally, the Warlord operates an organization which is somewhat centralized, highly specialized, and even smaller than the Operator's. The Warlord constructs an organization geared towards the recruitment and training of a disciplined corps of skilled fighters. Surprisingly, in comparison to Insurgents and Operators, the Warlord is not associated with a discernibly higher probability of centralization. This may be due, however, to the ubiquity of centralization across all rebel groups in my sample. As expected, the Warlord is also the most likely, by a long-shot, to construct a specialized political wing. This offers the Warlord two benefits corresponding with the other operational priorities: (1) it gives her organization a structural buffer between the outside world and the behavior of its more predatory fighting force and (2) it allows the Warlord to maintain an even higher degree of accountability and

monitoring of her subordinates. When individuals are placed in specialized units, they are given more task-specific assignments. This allows the Warlord to quickly assess whether her followers are following through with their orders. Ultimately, the Warlord is about securing profits for themselves and their coterie of ranking lieutenants. The Warlord is susceptible to some fragmentation, but their military experience seems to better equip them to secure the profits they need to maintain cohesion.

## 7.3    Scope and Limitations

This study is limited in its empirical scope in a number of way, which are worth mentioning here. First, I bracket the theoretical and empirical scope of this project to the study of rebel leadership in armed intrastate conflict. This means that I view rebel leaders just as we find them: at war. Undoubtedly, the process of rebel leadership begins well before the first bullets are fired. The recruitment of troops, the establishing of partnerships and allies within and across state borders, the acquisition of arms, and the formulation of a political and military strategy are all tasks begun by the savvy rebel leader before mounting an armed and violent challenge to the incumbent state.[2] And this process merits its own dissertation.

Second, and relatedly, I focus on how rebel leaders shape the organizational structure and cohesion of their organizations during war. This scope limitation has an unfortunate implication, we only observe and study those leaders who are successful in mounting a campaign viable enough to be recognized by the common data programs on armed non-state actors, those who generate a conflict of sufficient intensity to be registered. A more thorough analysis of this pre-war, twilight stage of armed conflict would consider the individuals behind both successful and failed rebel mobilizations. As such, I do not aim to explain the selection

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[2]Kent Layne Oots (1989: 143) argues, "The formation of a terrorist organization, like the formation of any other political organization, depends on the leadership's ability to recruit and retain a committed membership."

process by which certain rebel entrepreneurs "make it" while others do not. Instead, I focus on that subset of rebel entrepreneurs who emerge as bonafide rebel leaders.

A third limitation of this study is that the study of the UNITA insurgency features only one rebel leader type—i.e. the Insurgent. So, while this case provides insight into the mechanisms of organizational management for this leader type, it does not directly provide evidence for the other three leader types—i.e. the Ideologue, Operator, and Warlord. In future works, I hope to conduct interviews with the current or former members of rebel groups led by individuals of these types. In the meantime, the analysis of Jonas Savimbi's leadership of UNITA over the duration of the Angolan Civil War provides further support for my argument that a leader's motive and prior military experience shape the decisions they make and their own capacity to bring those decisions to bear on group behavior.

Fourth, gaps and data pose undesirable, but unavoidable limitations to this study. I find that the data available to measure rebel group size, centralization, and specialization is limited. This is the result of (1) moderate degrees of missingness in these variables in the limited number of datasets which record these factors and (2) differences in the cross-sectional and temporal dimensions of these datasets relative to RLCW. In addition, degrees of organizational centralization are certainly embodied along a more continuous scale of order, rather than the simple binary regime used here. Efforts to more specifically operationalize and measure centralization would serve a great benefit to the growing body of organizational theories of rebellion. Similarly, my own binary measure of fragmentation only captures part of the story. Some rebel lieutenants attempt, but fail to mobilize a splinter faction. As these do not materialize into an identifiable splinter faction, my quantitative analysis does not discern between such cases and those in which no fragmentation attempt is made. In the future, efforts should be made to buld on this study and others to address these stated data limitations.

Finally, this study is limited to the analysis of rebel leaders and rebel organizations—i.e.

those armed non-state actors who use organized violence to overthrow or replace the current government or secede from the current political regime. While corollaries almost certainly exist between these and "terrorist" leaders or groups, inference from this study should be extended to these with great care. Of course, many rebels are also designated terrorists—e.g. the TTP in Pakistan, the LTTE in Sri Lanka, the PIRA in the United Kingdom. Many terrorists, however, are not rebels, i.e. they have no interest in formal governance or wage campaigns of violence which fall under traditional thresholds of intensity. It is likely that the leadership and management of these organizations feature unique risks and responsibilities and, so, should not be grouped wholesale into the inferential target of this study.

## 7.4 Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications

This project makes a significant contribution to the literature, with meaningful implications for security policy. I offer a theoretical framework and empirical evidence for a perennial, but bracketed assumption in the conflict and security literature: rebel leaders matter. For over a decade, the literature has nominally incorporated rebel leaders into theories of rebel behavior without leveraging variation within this set of conflict actors. My dissertation makes an innovative and important contribution by approaching rebel leadership as a conceptual variable. In doing so, I offer an analytical lens through which to understand these actors, their limitations, and essential responsibilities.

As evidenced in this study, the four-part typology of rebel leadership offers a useful framework for explaining differences in rebel management. That said, I am under no illusion that military experience and motive are the only leader characteristics that matter. Certainly, other personal experiences shape how rebel leaders carry out the critical tasks of their station.

Many rebel leaders have prior political experience at various levels of government. Some come to leadership with prior experience in other civil wars. A leader's characteristics with respect to age, gender, education, and other personal characteristics may also influence their performance. Efforts are underway to expand the Rebel Leaders in Civil War Dataset to include measurements of these factors.

My dissertation brings a new perspective to the long-standing debate on the roles of structure and agency in shaping conflict processes. While many studies suggest that rebel leaders matter, these have largely failed to demonstrate exactly how and under what circumstances insurgent leaders shape the behavior and performance of their organizations. Instead, many prominent studies emphasize the deterministic influence of resource or social endowments in shaping rebel behavior, structure, and cohesion. However, the vast majority of rebel organizations have access to some combination of material and social resources; leaders decide how these resources are used. By leveraging meaningful sources of variation in rebel leadership I demonstrate how key individuals come to wield independent agency over conflict outcomes at the group level, while holding constant structural factors known to influence the conflict environment. In addition to offering a generalizable micro-level theory of rebellion, this project provides policy makers—who engage rebel leaders on the battlefield and at the negotiation table—with an intuitive tool that can be applied in a comparative global context.

Policymakers and military decision-makers have long emphasized the importance of rebel leadership. Indeed, the U.S. Army & Marine Corps (2007) emphasize that "Leadership is critical to any insurgency. An insurgency is not simply random violence; it is directed and focused violence aimed at achieving a political objective. It requires leadership to provide vision, direction, guidance, coordination, and organizational coherence. Successful insurgent leaders make their cause known to the people and gain popular support. Their key tasks are to break the ties between the people and the government and to establish credibility for their movement. Their education, background, family and social connections, and experiences

contribute to their ability to organize and inspire the people who form the insurgency" (1.13). I take this perspective seriously and aims to provide policy and security practitioners with a more complete understanding of exactly how leadership characteristics affect the decisions rebel leaders make with respect to the execution of insurgent warfare. The typology and data featured in this study can be used to make sense of the complex and multi-layered war environment and to forecast the trajectory and features of nascent wars based on the nature of their leadership.

In all, it is my hope that this project will serve to motivate similar leader-based studies and equip other scholars and practitioners with the tools needed to identify the responsibilities, limitations, and effects of militant leadership in contexts of armed intrastate conflict.

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